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FBIS-NES-96-058 CONTENTS *25 March 1996*

NOTICE: An * indicates material that may not be disseminated in electronic form.

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

Palestinian Affairs

Palestinian Affairs: Sha'th Said 'Convinced' Israel Not To Implement Oslo B *[SHIHAN 23-29 Mar]* 1
Palestinian Affairs: Radio—Israeli Policies Have 'Nauseating Impact' on Arabs *[Jericho VOP]* 1
Palestinian Affairs: Legislative Council Concludes Session 22 Mar *[Gaza TV]* 2
Palestinian Affairs: Labor Minister on Cabinet Session, Possible 'Arafat Tour *[Jericho VOP]* 2
Palestinian Affairs: Further on Cabinet Session; Minister on Hebron Issue *[Jericho VOP]* 2
Palestinian Affairs: Cabinet Discusses Measures Against Hamas, Other Issues *[Jericho VOP]* 3
Palestinian Affairs: Council Members To Meet Hamas, Islamic Jihad Leaders *[Jericho VOP]* 3
Palestinian Affairs: Abu-Rudaynah Denies Agreement With Hamas To Attack Israel *[Jericho VOP]* 3
Palestinian Affairs: Hamas Asks Human Rights Groups To Intervene With Israel *[JMCC PRESS SERVICE]* 4
Palestinian Affairs: INSP Spokesman Denies Links With Hamas *[Jericho VOP]* 4
Palestinian Affairs: Police Release Deputy Head of Islamic Political Party *[AFP]* 5
Palestinian Affairs: Hamas Denies Receiving Support From Iran *[AFP]* 6
Palestinian Affairs: Hamas Detainees Said To Plot PA 'Assassination Campaign' *[AFP]* 6
Palestinian Affairs: Hamas Members Arrested; Spokesman Predicts More Violence *[Paris Radio Monte Carlo]* 7
Palestinian Affairs: Hamas Denies Receiving 'Official' Support From Governments *[Al-Quds Palestinian Arab Radio]* 7
Palestinian Affairs: Fatah Movement's Abu-Jihad Praises Recent Bombings *[SANA]* 7
Palestinian Affairs: Security Forces Arrest Islamic Party Leader in Gaza *[Jerusalem Radio]* .. 8
Palestinian Affairs: PLO's 'Abbas Urges Israel To Rescind Deportation Decision *[AL-HAYAH AL-JADIDAH 21 Mar]* 8
Palestinian Affairs: Al-Za'nun on Possible Convening of PNC Session in Cairo *[AL-RA'Y 23 Mar]* 8
Palestinian Affairs: Labor Minister Comments on Unemployment, Israeli Obstacles *[MENA]* . 9
Palestinian Affairs: Hebron Mayor on Israeli Withdrawal, Living Conditions *[Cairo Radio]* .. 9

Arab-Israeli Talks

Arab-Israeli Talks: Envoy al-Mu'allim—Syria Rejects Israeli Conditions for Peace Talks *[AFP]* 10
Arab-Israeli Talks: Jordan's Prince Hasan, al-Kabariti Meet Israel's Beilin *[Jerusalem Radio]* 11

ARAB AFRICA

Algeria

Algeria: Islamist Attack on Bus Kills 10 *[Paris TV]* 12
Algeria: Bus Bombing Link to GIA Threat Considered *[Paris Radio]* 12
Algeria: Customs Officer Killed in Algiers *[Algiers Radio]* 12
Algeria: FIS European Supporters Issue Newsletter *[Southall THE ENLIGHTENMENT 19 Mar]* 12

Egypt

Egypt: Mubarak on Sharm al-Shaykh Summit, Domestic Issues *[MENA]* 15

Egypt: PA's 'Urayqat Meets Musa, Comments on Summit Resolutions *[Cairo Radio]* 16
Egypt: Musa, PA's 'Urayqat Comment Further on Summit, U.S. Stand *[MENA]* 16
Egypt: Musa—Israeli Collective Punishment Causes Frustration *[MENA]* 17
Egypt: Foreign Ministry Spokesman Criticizes Israeli Practices *[MENA]* 18
Egypt: Papers on 'Flare-Up' in Lebanon, Israeli Practices *[MENA]* 18
Egypt: Musa Returns From Asian Tour, Comments *[Cairo Radio]* 18
Egypt: Al-Baz Leaves for U.S., To Address Middle East Seminar *[MENA]* 19
Egypt: Libya Said To Seal Off Area Following Escape by Prisoners *[AFP]* 19
Egypt: Cypriot Justice Minister Begins Visit *[MENA]* 19
Egypt: Interior Minister Meets Cypriot Justice Minister *[MENA]* 19

Libya

Libya: Talks With Russia Open 24 Mar *[Tripoli Radio]* 20
Libya: Al-Qadhdhafi Meets With Russia's Davydov *[JANA]* 20
Libya: Prime Minister Meets With Russia's Davydov *[JANA]* 20
Libya: Foreign Liaison Secretary Meets With Russia's Davydov *[Tripoli Radio]* 20
Libya: Tripoli Rejects Western Communique on Sanctions *[JANA]* 20
Libya: Al-Qadhdhafi Seeks Funding Against Israeli 'Terrorism' *[AFP]* 21
Libya: Islamic Fundamentalists Reportedly Kill 16 Soldiers *[AFP]* 22

Morocco

Morocco: Local Council Officials Arrested for Embezzlement *[MAP]* 22
Morocco: Japan Grants Rabat $127 Million Loan *[Rabat TV]* 22

Sudan

Sudan: Airliner Reportedly Hijacked to Asmara *[MENA]* 22
Sudan: Further on Hijacking of Sudanese Airliner *[London MBC TV]* 23
Sudan: Captain of Hijacked Plane Interviewed *[London MBC TV]* 23
Sudan: Government's 24 Mar Statement on Hijacked Airliner *[Omdurman Radio]* 23
Sudan: AFP—Al-Bashir Wins Reelection With 75 Percent of Votes *[AFP]* 24
Sudan: Al-Bashir Wins Presidential Election *[MENA]* 24
Sudan: Official Announcement on al-Bashir's Election Win *[Omdurman Radio]* 24
Sudan: Al-Bashir Says National Salvation Revolution To Continue *[Omdurman Radio]* 24
Sudan: Al-Turabi Says Government To Draft New Constitution *[Omdurman Radio]* 24
Sudan: Opposition Says 95 Percent of Voters Boycotted Elections *[AFP]* 25

Western Sahara

Western Sahara: Polisario Said Ready To Cooperate With UN, Morocco *[Algiers Radio]* 25

ARABIAN PENINSULA

Bahrain

Bahrain: Police Disperse Anti-Government Protests *[AFP]* 26
Bahrain: Protests Held Overnight; Amir Remarks on Bangladeshi Victims *[AFP]* 26
Bahrain: Foreign Minister Says Security 'Prevailing' in Country *[WAKH]* 26
Bahrain: Opposition Leader on Unrest, Jordan's Offer of Help *[Tehran International]* 27

Yemen

Yemen: Salih, Eritrea's Afworki Comment on Hanish Island Dispute *[London MBC TV]* 28
Yemen: Salih Interviewed on Dispute With Eritrea *[Sanaa TV]* 29

Yemen: Official Accuses Eritrea of Foot Dragging on Conflict *[Cairo International]* ... 31
Yemen: Prime Minister on Economy, Reform, Dispute With Eritrea *[Sanaa Radio]* ... 32
Yemen: Prime Minister Denies Knowledge of Coup Attempt *[London AL-SHARQ AL-AWSAT 25 Mar]* ... 33
Yemen: Saudi-Yemeni Border Committee Issues Statement *[SPA]* ... 33
Yemen: Government 'Welcomes' Libya's Call for Arab Summit *[Sanaa TV]* ... 33

IRAQ

Iraq: Voting Starts in National Assembly Elections *[INA]* ... 34
Iraq: RCC Guidelines on National Assembly Elections *[AL-THAWRAH 7 Mar]* ... 34
Iraq: National Assembly Election Committee Reports on Measures *[Baghdad TV]* ... 35
Iraq: 'Huge' Voter Turnout Reported *[INA]* ... 35
Iraq: Vice President Ma'ruf Casts Vote, Comments on Elections *[INA]* ... 35
Iraq: Election Committee Chairman Tours Polling Stations *[INA]* ... 35
Iraq: Arab, Foreign Press Delegations Tour Polling Centers *[INA]* ... 36
Iraq: Dailies Laud 'Democracy' of Election Process *[INA]* ... 36
Iraq: Arab League Delegate Commends National Assembly Elections *[INA]* ... 37
Iraq: Opposition Group Sees Elections as 'Farce' *[THE TIMES 25 Mar]* ... 37
Iraq: Polls Close, Vote Counting To Start *[Baghdad TV]* ... 38
Iraq: Information Minister on UN Talks, Domestic Issues *[SHIHAN 29 Mar]* ... 38
Iraq: BABIL Says UN Should Fire Ekeus for 'False Reports' *[AFP]* ... 39
Iraq: Paper on U.S. 'False Claims' About Iraqi Threat to Gulf *[INA]* ... 40
Iraq: Egypt Air Delegation Arrives To Settle Financial Issues *[MENA]* ... 40
Iraq: Jordan, Kurds Confirm Former Chief of Staff's Defection *[London AL-SHARQ AL-AWSAT 22 Mar]* ... 40
Iraq: Opposition Claims Regime's Forces Repelled in South *[KUNA]* ... 41
Iraq: Regime Artillery Reportedly Pounds Kurdish Villages *[Voice of the People]* ... 41

ISRAEL

Israel: Peres on Lebanon Situation, Hebron Withdrawal *[Jerusalem TV]* ... 42
Israel: Beilin on Conditions for Lebanon Withdrawal *[Jerusalem TV]* ... 44
Israel: U.S. Said Urging Morocco's Hassan To Visit Israel *[THE JERUSALEM POST 25 Mar]* ... 45
Israel: Qatar Reportedly Not To Open Representation in Israel *[Jerusalem Radio]* ... 45
Israel: Curfew Imposed on West Bank Village Following Firebomb Attack *[Jerusalem Radio]* ... 45
Israel: Hamas Activists Arrested; Palestinians Allowed Back in Erez *[Jerusalem Radio]* ... 45
Israel: Peres on Rabin Assassination, Talks With Syria, Iran *[Jerusalem Radio]* ... 46
Israel: Yatom Named New Mosad Head; Peres on Easing of Closure *[Jerusalem Radio]* ... 46
Israel: U.S. Expected To Recognize Israeli Nuclear Ability in Pact *[HA'ARETZ 24 Mar]* ... 46
Israel: Sources Deny AL-BILAD Report on Hamas Deportations *[Jerusalem Radio]* ... 47
Israel: No Chances of Left-Wing Bloc Prior to Elections *[Jerusalem Radio]* ... 47
Israel: Government Using U.S. Loan Guarantees for Private Sector *[HA'ARETZ 25 Mar]* ... 47
Israel: Closure Again Partially Eased; PA Said Violating Agreement *[Jerusalem Radio]* ... 47
Israel: Peres Approves Continued Medical Treatment for Palestinians *[Jerusalem Radio]* ... 48

JORDAN

Jordan: Iraqi Diplomat Reportedly Deported *[MENA]* ... 49
Jordan: Expelled Diplomat Said To Have Been Monitoring Iraqis *[London AL-SHARQ AL-AWSAT 25 Mar]* ... 49
Jordan: 'Tit-For-Tat' Embassy Expulsions Between Amman, Baghdad Noted *[AFP]* ... 49
Jordan: Al-Kabariti on al-Khazraji Arrival, 'Terrorist' Acts *[AL-RA'Y 24 Mar]* ... 50
Jordan: Iraqi National Accord Welcomes General's 'Defection' *[JORDAN TIMES 24 Mar]* ... 51
Jordan: Former Iraqi Chief of Staff's Whereabouts 'Unclear' *[JORDAN TIMES 23 Mar]* ... 51

Jordan: Iraqi Defector Reportedly Neither Requested Nor Given Asylum [*London AL-QUDS AL-'ARABI 23/24 Mar*] 52
Jordan: Damascus TV Reports Amman Received U.S. Fighter Jets 53
Jordan: Paper on U.S. Envoy's 'Stormy' Meeting With Businessmen [*AL-HADATH 25 Mar*] 53
Jordan: Columnist Criticizes U.S. Aircraft Deployment in Jordan [*SHIHAN 29 Mar*] 53
Jordan: Al-Kabariti Promises 'All Forms' of Support to Bahrain [*AL-HAYAH 24 Mar*] 54
Jordan: Ex-Consul of Sri Lanka Detained in 'Baby-Sale' Case [*JORDAN TIMES 25 Mar*] 54
Jordan: 3 Arrested for Planning Suicide Attacks Against Israelis [*AL-ASWAQ 23 Mar*] 55
Jordan: Aims, Details of Security Crackdown Viewed [*London AL-SHARQ AL-AWSAT 24 Mar*] 55
Jordan: Palestinian Security Delegation Holds Talks, Departs [*AL-MASHRIQ 23 Mar*] 56
Jordan: Al-Mu'ashshir Denies Ghawshah Under House Arrest [*AL-RA'Y 22 Mar*] 56
Jordan: King Undergoes 'Successful' Ear Surgery in U.S. [*Amman Radio*] 56
Jordan: Energy Minister Confirms No Increase in Radiation Levels [*Amman Radio*] 56

LEBANON

Lebanon: Al-Hariri Discusses Hizballah, Palestinians [*AL-AHRAM 16 Mar*] 58
Lebanon: Buwayz Expects Israeli Military Operation [*Beirut Radio*] 60
Lebanon: Hizballah Prepared To Respond to Aggression [*Beirut Radio*] 60
Lebanon: Ministers, Shiite Clergy on Prospects for Israeli Attack [*VOL*] 60
Lebanon: Defense Minister, Islamic Figures React to Israeli Threat [*Beirut Radio*] 61
Lebanon: Hizballah's Qasim Links Katyusha Firing to Israeli Shelling [*Voice of the Oppressed*] 61
Lebanon: Hizballah Slams Arab, World Silence About Israeli 'Crimes' [*Voice of the Oppressed*] 61
Lebanon: Buwayz on Israeli Demand on Hizballah, Iranian Response [*VOL*] 62
Lebanon: Officials Cited on Israeli 'Threats,' U.S. Position [*Beirut Radio*] 62
Lebanon: Israelis Build Up Military Forces in Southern Security Zone [*Beirut Radio*] 62
Lebanon: Hizballah Denies Change in 'Understanding' With Israel [*Voice of the Oppressed*] 63
Lebanon: Invitation to Sharm al-Shaykh Follow-up Meeting Received [*VOL*] 63
Lebanon: Diplomatic Ties With Iran Said 'Chilly' [*MENA*] 63
Lebanon: Iranian Diplomat—'Misunderstanding' Not 'Crisis' in Ties [*London AL-SHARQ AL-AWSAT 25 Mar*] 63
Lebanon: Israeli Forces Demolish Hizballah Man's Hideout in South [*Jerusalem TV*] 63
Lebanon: Legal Status of South Lebanon Army, Lahd [*London AL-MAJALLAH 18-24 Feb*] 64
Lebanon: Syria Said Trying To Cool Down Hizballah at U.S. Request [*London AL-SHARQ AL-AWSAT 22 Mar*] 64

SYRIA

Syria: Press on 'Futility' of Israel's Use of Force in Lebanon [*Damascus Radio*] 65
Syria: Envoy Says U.S. Sponsor 'Imposing New Priorities' on Region [*Paris Radio Monte Carlo*] 65
Syria: Press Questions Israel's Peace Intentions [*Damascus Radio*] 66
Syria: Commentary Criticizes 'Hostile Conduct' by Israel [*Damascus Radio*] 67
Syria: Iraqi Opposition Representatives To Meet in Damascus 23 Mar [*Paris Radio Monte Carlo*] 68
Syria: World Urged To Defend International Legitimacy [*Damascus Radio*] 68

SOUTH ASIA

Afghanistan

Afghanistan: Talks Between Hezb-e Eslami, Government 'Suspended' [*Message of Freedom*] 70
Afghanistan: Opposition Radio Says Government 'Ready To Launch Attack' [*Message of Freedom*] 70
Afghanistan: Rabbani—Talks With Islamic Party 'Proceeding Successfully' [*Message of Freedom*] 70
Afghanistan: Taleban Rockets Kill 1, Wound 4 [*Kabul Radio*] 70
Afghanistan: 5 Taleban Members Killed in Clash in Nimroz [*Message of Freedom*] 70

Afghanistan: Opposition Reportedly Operating Forced Labor Gangs *[Message of Freedom]* ... 71
Afghanistan: Air Attacks Kill 40 Taleban Members *[Kabul Radio]* ... 71
Afghanistan: Artillery Attack Kills 18, Injures 16 in Kabul *[AFP]* ... 71
Afghanistan: Government Forces Attack Taleban Positions Around Kabul *[Kabul Radio]* ... 72

Bangladesh

Bangladesh: BNP Asks Awami League To Help Resolve Political Crisis *[Dhaka Radio]* ... 72
Bangladesh: Security Forces Raid Opposition Strongholds in Chittagong *[AFP]* ... 72

India

India: Muslim Rebels Reportedly Seize Kashmir's Holiest Shrine *[AFP]* ... 73
India: PTV Reports Developments at Kashmir Shrine *[Islamabad TV]* ... 73
India: Kashmir Government To Maintain Sanctity of Muslim Shrine *[Delhi Radio]* ... 74
India: Muslim Rebels Remain in Control of Kashmir's Holiest Mosque *[AFP]* ... 74
India: Kashmir Shrine Situation Updated; Pakistani Firing Reported *[Delhi Radio]* ... 75
India: Communist Party-Marxist Releases Election Manifesto *[Delhi Radio]* ... 75
India: Central Team Meets 3 Militant Leaders in Kashmir *[Delhi Radio]* ... 75
India: Kashmir 'Militant' Party in Favor of Elections *[Delhi Radio]* ... 76
India: Kashmiri Leaders 'Once Again' Reject Kashmir Election Plans *[Islamabad TV]* ... 76
India: Rao Urges Pakistan Not To Disrupt Elections in Kashmir *[Delhi Radio]* ... 76
India: Bahujan Samaj Party Rules Out Alliance With Janata Dal *[Delhi Radio]* ... 76
India: BJP Decides To Forge Alliance With Regional Parties *[Delhi TV]* ... 77
India: Political Parties To Boycott Polls in Arunachal Pradesh *[Delhi TV]* ... 77
India: Janata Dal, SP Alliance To Contest Uttar Pradesh Election *[Delhi Radio]* ... 77
India: 'Significant Maneuver' on Satellite Completed *[Delhi Radio]* ... 77
India: Performance of Satellite, German Scanner Updated *[Delhi TV]* ... 77
India: Rao Supports Continuation of Space Program *[Delhi Radio]* ... 78

Iran

Iran: Khamene'i Addresses Current Issues in Mashhad *[Tehran TV]* ... 78
Iran: Tehran Radio on Khamene'i Address ... 79
Iran: President Rafsanjani Arrives for Visit to Bandar Abbas *[IRNA]* ... 82
Iran: President Visits Biotechnology Center in Qeshm *[IRNA]* ... 83
Iran: President Rafsanjani Opens Sarkhoun Gas Refinery *[IRNA]* ... 83
Iran: Commentary on U.S. 'Political, Economic Isolation' of Iran *[Tehran International]* ... 83
Iran: Tehran Radio Reviews Year of 'Problems' for U.S. Policy *[Tehran Radio]* ... 84
Iran: U.S. Call For Anti-Terrorism Conference Viewed *[JOMHURI-YE ESLAMI 17 Mar]* ... 85
Iran: Paper Says Germany 'Duped' by MKO *[JOMHURI-YE ELSAMI 17 Mar]* ... 85
Iran: Paper Discusses German Warrant Against Minister *[IRAN 18 Mar]* ... 87
Iran: Daily Terms German Warrant 'Zionist Scenario' *[ABRAR 18 Mar]* ... 88
Iran: Spy Affair Threatens Relations With West *[THE GUARDIAN 25 Mar]* ... 88
Iran: Commentary Criticizes Turkey's 'Anti-Iranian' Stand *[KHORASAN 14 Mar]* ... 90
Iran: Daily Attacks Turkish Allegations Against Iranian Diplomats *[IRAN 16 Mar]* ... 91
Iran: Radio Calls On Turkey To Improve Rights of Turkish Kurds *[Tehran International]* ... 91
Iran: Syrian Envoy Denies Official Involvment in Berlin Bombings *[IRNA]* ... 92
Iran: Editorial on Opposition Interpretation of Election Results *[RESALAT 16 Mar]* ... 92
Iran: Editorial Questions Election Campaign Price *[KEYHAN 16 Mar]* ... 93
Iran: Paper Says Ministerial Positions Not To Be Used for Elections *[RESALAT 17 Mar]* ... 93
Iran: Mojahedin Protests Division of Nuri Election Votes *[ASR-E MA 17 Mar]* ... 94
Iran: KDP Radio Reports PUK Shelling *[IRNA]* ... 94
Iran: Student Association on Emergence of 'Secularism' *[ASR-E MA 17 Mar]* ... 95

Nepal

Nepal: Hectic Political Activity Ahead of No-Confidence Motion *[Delhi International]* ... 95

Nepal: Opposition Fails To Win Support for No-Confidence Motion *[AFP]* 95
Nepal: Government Survives No-Confidence Vote *[Kathmandu Radio]* 96
Nepal: RPP Issues Statement on Talks With King *[THE KATHMANDU POST 23 Mar]* 96
Nepal: Ministers Reportedly Resign During No-Confidence Debate *[THE KATHMANDU POST 23 Mar]* 97
Nepal: Party Leader Criticizes CPN-UML for Undermining RPP *[THE KATHMANDU POST 24 Mar]* 97
Nepal: Opposition Introduces No-Confidence Motion in Parliament *[THE KATHMANDU POST 23 Mar]* 98

Pakistan

Pakistan: President Leghari Addresses Military Parade *[Islamabad TV]* 99
Pakistan: Pakistan Day Celebration in Kashmir Reported *[Islamabad TV]* 100
Pakistan: Leghari Says Pakistan Believes in Nonproliferation *[Islamabad Radio]* 100
Pakistan: Bhutto—Kashmir Election 'Farce' Cannot Resolve Issue *[Islamabad Radio]* 101
Pakistan: Commentary Views India's Concern Over U.S. Arms Supply *[Islamabad Radio]* 101
Pakistan: Bhutto Expresses Concern Over Nuclear Threat in Region *[Islamabad Radio]* 102
Pakistan: Army Chief Warns India Against Erecting Fence on Border *[Islamabad Radio]* 103

Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka: Tamil Expatriates in London Forced To Pay Money to LTTE *[Colombo International]* 103
Sri Lanka: LTTE Dispatch Reports Offensives Against Troops *[Tamil Eelam News WWW 19 Mar]* 103
Sri Lanka: LTTE Reports Ambush on Troops in Weligama *[Tamil Eelam News WWW]* 104
Sri Lanka: Heavy Fighting Raging in Eastern Region; Toll Mounts to 41 *[AFP]* 104
Sri Lanka: 50 Tamil Rebels, 40 Soldiers Killed in Battle in East *[DAILY NEWS 25 Mar]* 104
Sri Lanka: Radio Reports 'Major Military Buildup' *[Colombo International]* 105
Sri Lanka: Tamil Tigers Kill 12 Soldiers in Fresh Attack *[AFP]* 105
Sri Lanka: Rebel Suspects Arrested in Security Operation in Colombo *[DAILY NEWS 23 Mar]* 105
Sri Lanka: Air Force Bombing Reportedly Killed Civilians, Not Rebels *[SUNDAY OBSERVER 24 Mar]* 106

Palestinian Affairs

Palestinian Affairs: Sha'th Said 'Convinced' Israel Not To Implement Oslo B

JN2203124196 Amman SHIHAN in Arabic 23-29 Mar 96 p 15

[FBIS Translated Text] Ramallah — Dr. Nabil Sha'th, minister of planning and international cooperation in the Palestinian National Authority and a senior Palestinian negotiator in the peace talks, said that he is now fully convinced that Israel will not continue to implement the Oslo B agreement.

In a telephone contact with SHIHAN after his return from the antiterrorism summit in Sharm al-Shaykh, Sha'th said that all signs indicate that the peace process entered a stage of stalemate that will not end before the Knesset elections due to be held in May are over.

Sha'th said that this stalemate includes the failure to implement the final part of the agreement on Israeli redeployment from the West Bank and a halt in the process of releasing Palestinian prisoners from Israeli jails, including those who were supposed to be released according to a previous agreement, as well as other punishment measures against the Palestinians.

Sha'th spoke about Israel's continued closure of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. He said that many countries stopped their aid to the Palestinian people and that Israel is barring and delaying the arrival of other aid through its seaports and airports.

The Palestinian minister added: Israel is exercising collective punishment and is making the Palestinian people victims of acts carried out by individuals. We are willing to cooperate. However, we are not willing to be a subject for blame. We want balanced steps, which take into consideration that what the Palestinian Authority did to combat terrorism could not be done by any inexperienced government or new authority.

Palestinian Affairs: Radio—Israeli Policies Have 'Nauseating Impact' on Arabs

JN2503115696 Jericho Voice of Palestine in Arabic 0620 GMT 25 Mar 96

[Station commentary by Yusuf al-Qazzaz from the "A New Day" feature]

[FBIS Translated Text] We have not informed our Palestinian people, as yet, of all the tools of sabotage and crime that the outlaws intended to use against our elected leadership, headed by Abu-'Ammar [Yasir 'Arafat], our national symbol, in service of the evil heads of sedition who carry out a clandestine policy, who are the enemies of Palestine, the Arabs, and the Islamic message, as well as the enemies of peace, and who work to serve those Israelis who want to destroy the peace process.

It is regrettable that the Israeli Government allowed itself to be swept away by the logic of the extremist settlers to strike at the peace process and impose a siege on Palestine — governorates, districts, and its capital Jerusalem. The collective punishment against the Palestinian people, the most deeply rooted people on the purest of lands; the demolition of houses; the torture and starvation operations; the settlements; the incarceration of female and male detainees not only contradict the so-called democracy, they also violate the basic human rights in this world and on this Palestinian land, the land on which the prophets made their first steps and from where they ascended to Heaven to meet God.

These Israeli policies have started to have a nauseating impact on the Arab capitals whose governments signed peace agreements with the Israelis. The Egyptian press questions Shim'on Peres' credibility with respect to peace. The Egyptian Government, through its Foreign Minister 'Amr Musa, refers to Peres' hostility to the peace process.

Dr. Fahd al-Fanik, a well-known Jordanian economist, did well when he said in an article in the Jordanian paper AL-RA'Y that if Peres wants to prove that he is no less aggressive than his adversary in the elections, then he is playing a losing game. The section of the Israeli public opinion that demands aggression against and oppression of the Palestinians and a halt to the peace process will not vote for Peres because it has another candidate who is more capable than Peres for this job, the job of oppressing the Palestinians and freezing the peace process.

Al-Fanik did well when he also explained that Peres would be making a mistake if he believes he can take the Jordanian people for granted. Al-Fanik adds: We, in Jordan cannot remain silent on the killing of innocent Palestinians. We call for reconsidering everything. Al-Fanik adds: Faced with the collective punishment against the Palestinians, we, in Jordan, will have no other option but to apologize for our pro-peace position toward Israel. He adds: Israel wages a war against an Arab people and must realize that it is blowing up the peace process.

While taking into consideration all these official, semi-official, popular, and media stands, we say that all the Palestinians in Israel, Palestine, or in the other places where they live should act to attain the one objective of peace and the abidance by the strategic peace option. This can be done by wiping out terrorism, the terrorism which is guided from abroad and from anywhere as this terrorism only serves those Israelis who want to oppress and stifle the Palestinians, or those Israelis who rallied around the logic of the settlers and imposed the siege on the Palestinian people, turning their lives into unbearable hell.

We whisper the following in Mr. Peres' ear: You cannot dream of normalization with the Arabs if the Palestinian people do not live a normal life in an independent state with Jerusalem as capital, a state which is totally separated from Israel.

Palestinian Affairs: Legislative Council Concludes Session 22 Mar

JN2203154796 Gaza Palestinian Broadcasting Corporation Television Network in Arabic 1200 GMT 22 Mar 96

[Announcer-read report]

[FBIS Translated Text] The Palestinian Legislative Council concluded its second session at dawn today. It approved the Council's bylaws as amended by the provisional legal committee.

Council Member Dr. Musa al-Za'but said the bylaws were endorsed with a majority vote. He said the bylaws were referred to President Yasir 'Arafat for endorsement and publishing in the government press.

Al-Za'but said a committee set up by the Council will today draft a resolution on the Israeli violations of the agreements signed between the Palestinians and Israel. He said the Council will send messages to parliaments around the world to urge them to intercede and to pressure the Israeli Government to lift the military siege and stop collective punishment against our Palestinian people.

Palestinian Affairs: Labor Minister on Cabinet Session, Possible 'Arafat Tour

JN2303134196 Jericho Voice of Palestine in Arabic 1108 GMT 23 Mar 96

[Report by 'Adil al-Za'nun in Gaza from the "Today's Events" program]

[FBIS Translated Text] The meeting of the National Authority's Council of Ministers, which was held under His Excellency President Yasir 'Arafat at the Presidency in Gaza, concluded a short while ago. The council's discussions focused on the adverse consequences of the military blockade imposed by the Israeli occupation authorities on the Palestinian territories for the past month, as well as the collective punishment policy Israel is pursuing against the Palestinian people.

Labor Minister Dr. Samir Ghawshah pointed out that the council debated the impact of the military siege, which has produced a general state of unemployment in the Palestinian territories, as well as the solutions that would help overcome this economic crisis. Dr. Ghawshah declared that the rate of unemployment in the Palestinian territories has reached 78 percent. He warned of the total collapse of the Palestinian economy. He indicated that contacts are currently under way on the Arab and international levels to surmount the problems caused by the military siege. Ghawshah announced that 'Arafat might visit Egypt, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, and the Gulf states to explain the political situation experienced by the Palestinian people, including their deteriorating economic situation.

Ghawshah also noted that the council debated the follow-up work of the Sharm al-Shaykh summit, including the meetings due to be held toward the end of this month, and the arrangements for this. The labor minister added that the council discussed the launch of new projects to create jobs for Palestinian workers on Palestinian territory.

For his part, former Local Government Minister Dr. Sa'ib 'Urayqat, who attended the meeting, said that the Council of Ministers approved the travel of a Palestinian delegation to be headed by him for Washington to attend the work of the committee whose formation was endorsed at the Sharm al-Shaykh summit. 'Urayqat added that he will leave for Egypt at the head of a Palestinian delegation today for consultations on the committee's meetings slated to be held in Washington toward the end of this month. Dr. 'Urayqat reiterated his rejection of the collective punishment policy pursued by the Israeli occupation authorities.

Palestinian Affairs: Further on Cabinet Session; Minister on Hebron Issue

JN2303155896 Jericho Voice of Palestine in Arabic 1300 GMT 23 Mar 96

[Report by 'Adil al-Za'nun in Gaza]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] The National Authority's cabinet, which convened under President Yasir 'Arafat at the Presidency in Gaza today, decided to take a number of domestic economic measures to address the unemployment issue resulting from the Israeli military siege being imposed on the Palestinian territories.

The cabinet also decided to raise this issue on the widest possible level and hold contacts with the concerned parties on the regional and international levels in order for them to assume their responsibilities, especially since the Israeli siege will lead to serious political results.

Culture Minister Yasir 'Abd-Rabbuh said that these results will be necessarily reflected on the whole peace process and the region. He stressed the need for the Israeli occupation forces to withdraw from the Hebron Governorate on the date set in the agreement. He also stressed the need for Israel not to make excuses whatsoever on this issue.

'Abd-Rabbuh said: The siege, starvation, and the dealing of blows to the Palestinian economy as well as the permission of settlement activities on Palestinian territories are taking place under various Israeli pretexts. [passage omitted]

Palestinian Affairs: Cabinet Discusses Measures Against Hamas, Other Issues

JN2303194996 Jericho Voice of Palestine in Arabic 1800 GMT 23 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] At its meeting in Gaza today under President Yasir 'Arafat, the [Palestinian] Council of Ministers adopted several economic measures to expeditiously create job opportunities for extricating the Palestinian people from their tribulation caused by the Israeli military and economic siege imposed on Palestine.

The council discussed the political, security, and economic situation in Palestine in light of the continued Israeli military closure and siege, and rejected all the Israeli pretexts for their perpetuation. The council also discussed the results of the investigations by the Palestinian security agencies into the secret organs the Hamas [Islamic Resistance Movement] established to undermine Palestinian security. The Council affirmed that these organs receive their orders from abroad, they have suspect objectives, and they seek to abort the peace agreements and obstruct the attainment of Palestinian rights.

The Council of Ministers discussed unemployment which is daily increasing among the Palestinian people as a result of the Israeli siege and collective punishment. Labor Minister Dr. Samir Ghawshah said that the unemployment rate in Palestine reached 78 percent over the past days as a result of the closure Israel is imposing on Palestine.

The council also discussed the agenda the U.S. Administration proposed for following up the decisions made at the Sharm al-Shaykh peacemakers conference, and emphasized the need to abide by the priorities adopted by the conference, particularly those having to do with supporting the peace process and implementing the agreements with the Israeli side.

The council decided to stop using the term Gaza District and the northern districts and to replace it with the term Palestinian governorates in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

The council also discussed the draft election law for the Palestinian local bodies for this year. It decided to further study it before referring it to the Legislative Council for discussion and adoption.

Palestinian Affairs: Council Members To Meet Hamas, Islamic Jihad Leaders

JN2403195296 Jericho Voice of Palestine in Arabic 1800 GMT 24 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] 'Imad al-Faluji, member of the Palestinian Legislative Council, said that a number of Council members will meet with leaders from Hamas [Islamic Resistance Movement] and Islamic Jihad to listen to their views and then convey these views to the National Authority.

At a news conference at the Arab Journalists League headquarters in Gaza today, al-Faluji said the meeting will include Dr. Mahmud al-Zahhar and Sayyid Abu-Musamih from Hamas and Dr. Muhammad al-Hindi and 'Abdallah al-Shami from Islamic Jihad.

Al-Faluji stressed the need to respect democracy under the canopy of law and the need to hold national dialogue to resolve the crisis facing the Palestinian people.

Palestinian Affairs: Abu-Rudaynah Denies Agreement With Hamas To Attack Israel

JN2203184496 Jericho Voice of Palestine in Arabic 1800 GMT 22 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Nabil Abu-Rudaynah, adviser to President Yasir 'Arafat, denied charges by Israeli Knesset member Beni Begin that there is an agreement between the National Authority and Hamas [Islamic Resistance] Movement according to which Hamas members are allowed to carry out operations against Israel. Abu-Rudaynah referred to the National Authority's decisions which aim at stopping violent actions and to its repeated calls on all citizens to respect the PLO commitments and to abide by the law.

Meanwhile, Abu-Rudaynah said the Palestine National Council is expected to be convened within the next two months after the return of all council members to the homeland and after Israel implements the agreements, especially the withdrawal from Hebron on the set date.

Palestinian Affairs: Hamas Asks Human Rights Groups To Intervene With Israel

TA2303160296 Jerusalem JMCC PRESS SERVICE in English 1400 GMT 23 Mar 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Hamas [Islamic Resistance Movement] issued a leaflet carrying today's date asking unspecified human rights groups to intervene with Israel to stop its reported plans to expel Palestinians related to the suicide bombers. The leaflet apparently came from Hamas outside the occupied territories. Following is the text:

To Human Rights Organizations:

High-level Israeli officials say there is an imminent Israeli decision to expel dozens of Palestinians from their land on the suspicion that they have direct relations to those who carried out the Palestinian resistance activities against Israeli occupation.

Such expulsion campaigns against Palestinians remind us of the Israeli occupation policies in force since 1967. Thousands of Palestinians still live in diaspora because of expulsion decisions taken over the past 28 years.

The occupation authority's decision to use expulsion as a means to confront the resistance of the Palestinian people to occupation measures reminds us of the mass expulsion of more than 400 Palestinians to Marj Al-Zuhur in southern Lebanon in December 1992.

We in Hamas, rejecting and condemning the policy of emptying Palestine of its people by force under false security pretexts, implore you to intervene immediately to prevent a repletion of Israeli occupation authorities returning to the policy of forced emigration regardless of their justifications. These emigration orders are considered one of the most dangerous human rights violations, and most hostile toward political rights, namely one's rights to live on his land and retain his property.

Hamas asks you to assume your responsibilities, practice your role in defending human rights, and condemn this Israeli behavior which violates all international charters. It violates dozens of UN and Security Council resolutions in this regard.

You should aim to prevent a repetition of the catastrophe of forced emigration of new Palestinians. You should also ask for the return of the thousands of Palestinian expellees, for them to reunite with their families. You should launch a quick campaign to put an end to new expulsions of Palestinians. There should be broad international pressure to prevent them.

Palestinian Affairs: INSP Spokesman Denies Links With Hamas

JN2303164296 Jericho Voice of Palestine in Arabic 1145 GMT 23 Mar 96

[Interview with Fikri 'Abd-al-Latif, INSP spokesman, by Ahmad Zaki; place and date not given; from the "Today's Events" program]

[FBIS Translated Text] [Zaki] Fikri 'Abd-al-Latif, spokesman for the Islamic National Salvation Party [INSP], good afternoon.

['Abd-al-Latif] Good afternoon.

[Zaki] Have you faced any difficulties in obtaining a license for the INSP from the National Authority [NA]?

['Abd-al-Latif] The truth is that we submitted an application to obtain a license at the end of last year, and we obtained it without any worth mentioning difficulties.

[Zaki] What about the objectives of the party?

['Abd-al-Latif] The objectives of the party constitute an attempt to deal with the current situation through political means. In other words, following the political agreements the PLO signed with the Israeli side, a new situation was created for the Palestinian people. This situation is represented by the NA's control over parts of Palestine. This necessitated a new way of dealing with the new situation. The party was established to be the mechanism of the Islamists' dealing with the new situation.

[Zaki] Where does the party stand regarding the Hamas [Islamic Resistance] Movement, for example?

['Abd-al-Latif] The party is not organizationally linked with any movement, organization, or political trend in the homeland. However, the Islamic movements proceed from specific and clear Islamic convictions. They do not disagree on strategic issues. The party agrees with all the Islamic trends, on the ideological level. However, on the organizational level, it has no relationship whatsoever with any political party or Islamic movement in the arena.

[Zaki] How do you view the future relationship between the INSP and the NA?

['Abd-al-Latif] We look at this issue from two angles. The first is the need to safeguard the Palestinian national unity, and to foil any attempt to fragment the Palestinian people. The second is that we should voice our rejection of the recent political agreements which were signed with the Israeli side. We act within these two axes.

[Zaki] Will the INSP join the opposition?

['Abd-al-Latif] Concerning the political objectives, we can call ourselves opposition, but we should all be united to build the homeland.

[Zaki] If you were asked to participate in the Palestinian government, or to obtain a ministerial post for your party, will the party agree?

['Abd-al-Latif] We have not thus far been asked to, but there are legislative committees in the party which will examine this issue. In principle, we have no objection.

[Zaki] You met with President Yasir 'Arafat last night. What are the results of this meeting?

['Abd-al-Latif] In general, the meeting with President Yasir 'Arafat was a get-acquainted meeting to exchange views. It was a cordial and an extremely positive meeting, during which the president expressed readiness to help the party achieve certain demands which we will not reveal now.

[Zaki] The establishment of the party coincides with the materialization of the Palestinian parliamentary life, do you have anything to say in this regard?

['Abd-al-Latif] In fact, preparations to establish the party began before the elections. Perhaps, you know that the first inception of the party was on 11 December 1995, but its establishment was not announced due to the prevailing circumstances at that time. We seek to exercise political action in the Palestinian society in a democratic way. We support legislative elections and the parliamentary life, and we seek to entrench them in the Palestinian society.

[Zaki] Can the establishment of the party be considered a prelude to participating in the municipal elections, for example?

['Abd-al-Latif] Principally, we will participate in the municipal elections, God willing. We, in the party, are convinced of participating in any other general elections.

[Zaki] Taking into consideration its members and structure, is there any contradiction between the INSP and the Hamas Movement political approach?

['Abd-al-Latif] The party has its own political viewpoint. I do not prefer this issue of making connections with the Hamas Movement or with any other Islamic movement. The party has its own political convictions, and its members have their own political convictions. They act within this framework. They agree with all the ideological convictions of all the Islamic parties, trends, and movements in Palestine. However, they are not linked with them organizationally. This is what we want to emphasize.

[Zaki] Some sides say that this party has split from the Hamas Movement. What is your reaction to this?

['Abd-al-Latif] We do not consider ourselves a split. We say that the Islamic movement in general has various viewpoints on many issues, and everyone has the right to act in accordance with his own viewpoint.

[Zaki] Fikri 'Abd-al-Latif, spokesman for the INSP, thank you.

['Abd-al-Latif] Thank you.

Palestinian Affairs: Police Release Deputy Head of Islamic Political Party

NC2403111196 Paris AFP in English
1034 GMT 24 Mar 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Rafah, Gaza Strip, March 24 (AFP) — Palestinian police have released Fu'ad Nahal, the deputy head of a newly created Islamic political party, after questioning him for 20 hours about alleged fund-raising activities for the radical movement Hamas [Islamic Resistance Movement], friends said Sunday [24 March].

Nahal was released at 10:00 p.m. (1900 GMT) Saturday, said Khalid Falah, a partner in Nahal's pharmacy in this southern Gaza town.

His arrest overnight Friday came a day after Nahal and 18 other Hamas political leaders announced the formation of the Islamic National Salvation Party with the explicit support of Palestinian President Yasir 'Arafat.

Falah said Nahal was not detained in connection with the new party but for questioning about his activities as Gaza representative of the Islamic Relief Association, a charity based in the Israeli town of Nazareth.

Israeli authorities closed the association down a week ago, charging that it was a fund-raising front for the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas).

The military wing of Hamas carried out three of the four recent suicide bombings in Israel and has since been the target of a severe crackdown by Israeli and Palestinian authorities.

"They asked him how money from the association was distributed to orphans and others in Gaza, where the money was and other details about the group," Falah said.

Nahal and several other National Salvation Party leaders had what they described as a "very positive" meeting with 'Arafat late Friday. But immediately after the encounter Nahal was picked up by Palestinian police outside his Rafah home.

The National Salvation Party's founding principles were to oppose the Israeli-PLO autonomy agreements and use legal means to struggle for the creation of an Islamic state in all the Palestinian territories and Israel.

But the party implicitly renounced the use of violence and was seen as a way for Hamas moderates to try to avoid falling victim to the crackdown on the movement.

Four of the party's 19 founding members are now being held in prison by the Palestinian Authority while its president, Isma'il Abu-Shanab, has been in jail in Israel since 1989.

Palestinian Affairs: Hamas Denies Receiving Support From Iran

NC2403131596 Paris AFP in English
1255 GMT 24 Mar 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Jerusalem, March 24 (AFP) — The Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) rejected on Sunday [24 March] allegations by Israeli and Palestinian authorities that it received backing from Iran or other foreign powers.

Hamas "is not getting official support from any state or government," the movement said in a statement sent to news organizations.

Following a spate of suicide bombing attacks in Israel by Hamas, both Israeli Prime Minister Shim'on Peres and Palestinian President Yasir 'Arafat accused Iran of being behind the campaign to destroy the peace process.

Speaking a week ago, 'Arafat said the suicide bombings which killed 62 people and led to an unprecedented Israeli security clampdown on the Palestinian territories, were carried out "on the orders of Iran and a few Arab countries."

Peres singled Iran out as the mastermind behind the attacks when he addressed the anti-terrorism summit in Sharm al-Shaykh, Egypt, on March 13.

In Sunday's message, addressed to the Palestinian people, Hamas said not to believe the allegations that it received "financial aid from Iran or other countries."

"Hamas wants to tell the whole world that it gets its financial and moral support from the Palestinian people and (those of) the Islamic and Arab nations, who are eager for victory in liberating al-Aqsa," it said, referring to the Jerusalem mosque which is the third holiest site in Islam.

"It is not getting official support from any state or government," it said.

The movement went on to accuse 'Arafat's Palestinian Authority, which has arrested some 800 members of Hamas and the smaller Islamic Jihad in a bid to prevent further anti-Israeli attacks, of "holding the Hamas political movement hostage" in order to curry favor from Israel and "donor nations."

"They do not have the right to accuse the freedom fighters of such things," it said.

The statement also dismissed allegations by 'Arafat that Hamas had joined forces with right-wing Jewish opponents of the peace process. "This is an accusation we will not even respond to," it said.

Palestinian Affairs: Hamas Detainees Said To Plot PA 'Assassination Campaign'

NC2403163596 Paris AFP in English
1349 GMT 24 Mar 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Gaza City, March 24 (AFP) — Palestinian security police have uncovered a plot by a secret Hamas group to assassinate senior figures in the Palestinian Authority, Palestinian officials said Sunday [24 March].

"We have detained Hamas members in the recent campaign of arrests who were planning to assassinate important personalities in the Palestinian Authority," Attorney General Khalid al-Qidrah told AFP. Police captured "a large cache of arms" connected to the plot, he said, adding that the planned assassination campaign was the work of a "secret organization" made up of Hamas militants.

"There are very clear indications that they were trying to do something big against the authority and the Palestinian people," he said. The investigation is continuing, he said.

Al-Qidrah said the Palestinian Authority had arrested more than 700 militants of the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) and the smaller Islamic Jihad which claimed responsibility for four suicide bombings which killed 62 people in Israel in late February and early March.

Authority officials and Israel say the bombings were designed to derail the Palestinian peace process and undermine the autonomy government headed by Yasir 'Arafat.

Marwan Kanafani, Arafat's spokesman, confirmed Sunday that during interrogation of suspects arrested in the ongoing crackdown, "information surfaced that some people were attempting to kill officials in the security services."

"They were working according to a fatwah (Islamic religious ruling) to kill Palestinian policemen," he said.

'Arafat on Saturday told a meeting of his self-rule cabinet that the authority had uncovered plans by Hamas to set up secret groups in the West Bank and Gaza Strip to "sabotage the security situation" in Palestinian areas and undermine the autonomy authority.

"The result of the ongoing investigation (into the plots) will be presented to the Palestinian people so they can see how dangerous these people were," Kanafani said. Neither Kanafani nor al-Qidrah specified which officials had been targeted by the alleged Hamas plot.

Palestinian Affairs: Hamas Members Arrested; Spokesman Predicts More Violence

JN2403172796 Paris Radio Monte Carlo in Arabic 1700 GMT 24 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] As part of the recent arrest campaign against the Islamic Resistance Movement [Hamas], Palestinian police arrested a number of Hamas members who were planning to assassinate important members of the Palestinian National Authority.

Marwan Kanafani, adviser to President 'Arafat, said investigations confirmed the Hamas members' involvement in an plot to kill some security officials and that they had relied on a fatwa [religious ruling] permitting the killing of Palestinian policemen.

In another development, the Islamic Resistance Movement, in a statement distributed in the Palestinian territories, denied it had received Iranian or foreign funding for its military operations against Israel.

In the Jordanian capital, Amman, Hamas' official spokesman Ibrahim Ghawshah said Hamas will continue its operations against Israeli occupation. He asserted that the Israeli Government's measures against the families of those who carried out the recent operations will increase violence as the Israeli elections approach.

Palestinian Affairs: Hamas Denies Receiving 'Official' Support From Governments

JN2403195596 (Clandestine) Al-Quds Palestinian Arab Radio in Arabic 1730 GMT 24 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] The Islamic Resistance Movement, Hamas, issued a statement denouncing the 'Arafat authority's accusations against the movement under the umbrella of Zionist repression and with the aim of tarnishing our people's struggle and helping the terrorist Peres and his gangs stop our people's struggle and activities.

The statement said: The Islamic Resistance Movement, Hamas, announces to the world that it receives its moral and material support from our Palestinian people and from Arab and Islamic people who thirst for victory and for the liberation of al-Aqsa Mosque. It does not receive any official support from any state or governmental body.

The statement said: A [Palestinian] Authority, which placed the Palestinian cause onto the financial markets of the donor states and which mortgaged its political moves to the financial support it is getting, has no right to direct such accusations toward the mujahidin. As for accusing Hamas of receiving assistance from the Zionists to implement its blessed strikes, such accusations are so trivial they do not merit a moment's attention from us.

The movement said that our people do not distinguish between the Labor and Likud [parties] and that the movement has chosen its path to defend our people and rights.

The movement concluded by saying that campaigns of oppression and repression will not divert it from continuing its path toward liberation and independence.

Palestinian Affairs: Fatah Movement's Abu-Jihad Praises Recent Bombings

JN2403211896 Damascus SANA in Arabic 1700 GMT 24 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Amman, 24 Mar (SANA) — Staff Major General Muhammad Jihad, alias Abu-Jihad, who is the official in charge of the military forces in the Fatah Movement, welcomed the recent operations by Palestinian resistance members in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv. He urged continuation of this policy until the last Israeli soldier leaves the Palestinian territories.

In a statement to the QUDS PRESS news agency today, Abu-Jihad warned the limited Palestinian self-rule police against launching new repressive actions against the Palestinian people. He said that the people in the West Bank and Gaza Strip are beginning to lose patience. He also urged the self-rule authority to go back on its repressive practices and immediately stop meeting the Israeli demands.

Abu-Jihad said that if the repressive practices continue, they will soon topple the self-rule authority. He added that this authority, which is facing a large impasse, is trying to export its internal crisis in order to cover its failure to address issues.

Maj. Gen. Muhammad Jihad asserted that the Palestinian Council, which was elected under occupation rifles, has no right to represent the Palestinian people because it was tailored according to the Oslo measurements. Reiterating his rejection of any amendment to the Palestine National Charter, Abu-Jihad said that this charter is not the property of any individual or authority that receives orders from enemy authorities.

Palestinian Affairs: Security Forces Arrest Islamic Party Leader in Gaza

TA2303130596 Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in Hebrew 1200 GMT 23 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Early this morning in Gaza, Palestinian security forces arrested Fu'ad al-Nahal, chairman of the Islamic National Salvation Party. His relatives informed a REUTERS correspondent about his arrest, which has been confirmed by the security forces. According to his relatives, al-Nahal was arrested when he returned to his home in Rafah after meeting 'Arafat. Al-Nahal's brother said security forces raided his house and searched it thoroughly. His wife told them that her husband was at a meeting with 'Arafat and that they waited in ambush and arrested him upon his return.

Our correspondent Yoni Ben-Menahem points out that the Islamic National Salvation Party was founded two days ago. It identifies with Hamas [Islamic Resistance Movement] and opposes the Oslo agreements, but does not advocate an armed struggle.

Palestinian Affairs: PLO's 'Abbas Urges Israel To Rescind Deportation Decision

TA2403101396 Gaza AL-HAYAH AL-JADIDAH in Arabic 21 Mar 96 p 1

[Report by Ahmad Nakhkhalah]

[FBIS Translated Text] Gaza, AL-HAYAH AL-JADIDAH — PLO Executive Committee member Mahmud 'Abbas, alias Abu-Mazin, condemned the Israeli decision to demolish a number of houses in the northern districts as well as the preparation of lists of Palestinians whom Israel wants to deport.

Abu-Mazin described this policy as wrong and illogical, because by demolishing these houses Israel is punishing innocent people.

He added that the perpetration of a crime by a family member does not entitle one to punish women, children, and the elderly.

Abu-Mazin called on the Israeli Government to rescind its decision to deport some persons from the northern districts. He stressed that it is inconceivable to expel someone from his homeland just because he has done something wrong. He added that it is possible to arrest or put him on trial within framework of the law. He emphasized that international law has forbidden the deportation of any individual from his homeland under any circumstances.

Palestinian Affairs: Al-Za'nun on Possible Convening of PNC Session in Cairo

JN2303155696 Amman AL-RA'Y in Arabic 23 Mar 96 p 28

[Report by Mazin Sa'adah in Palestine]

[FBIS Translated Text] Salim al-Za'nun, alias Abu-al-Adib, [acting speaker of the Palestine National Council, PNC] accused Israel of obstructing the convening of the PNC within the two-month period set by the Taba agreement.

Al-Za'nun said Israel is responsible for obstructing the council meeting, adding that in light of the Israeli obstacles the convening of the meeting will not necessarily be in the National Authority areas.

He emphasized that the PNC will not be convened if Israel insists on preventing any PNC member from participation or from returning to the homeland. He said the PNC Speaker's Office will propose convening the council in Cairo.

Al-Za'nun said the Israeli Government approved the return of 192 council members who live abroad and refused the return of 18 others under the pretext that deportation decisions had been made against them.

The Executive Committee has not passed yet the invitation to convene the council to the PNC Speaker's Office as the bylaws stipulate.

Abu-al-Adib disclosed that he is making intensive contacts with the PLO factions in Palestine with the aim of shaping up a unified opinion on the convening of the PNC and the nature of the session that will be convened in order to secure the widest participation by all PLO factions.

Al-Za'nun said the opposition told the Speaker's Office that they want to attend if the session is an ordinary one and if it is not only devoted to discussing amending the charter. He expressed hope that the Palestinian opposition would adopt a policy that is based on working under the PNC umbrella, and said: The boycott policy followed by the opposition has been fruitless.

Abu-al-Adib expected that if the Israeli measures, delay, and prevarications continue, the PNC members will adopt a hardline position on amending any articles of the Palestinian National Charter.

Palestinian Affairs: Labor Minister Comments on Unemployment, Israeli Obstacles

NC2303133996 Cairo MENA in Arabic
0700 GMT 23 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] Cairo, 23 Mar (MENA)—The Arab delegations participating in the Arab labor conference have agreed on a plan to act effectively on the international level on the worsening problem of unemployment in the Palestinian territory amid Israel's continuing arbitrary measures such as the closure and sealing off of the territories; collective punishment of the Palestinian self-rule areas; and Israel's breaking of agreements. These measures have led to the deterioration of the economic and social situation in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank.

In a statement on the sidelines of the Arab labor conference meetings, published in AL-AHRAM today, Palestinian Labor Minister Dr. Samir Ghawshah says that this issue will be seriously pursued by the Arab representatives at the international labor conference in Geneva this June. He said that Egypt's fundamental and distinguished role at the Sharm al-Shaykh summit emphasized its firm stance in support of the Palestinian people until they obtain all their rights, including the right to return to their homes, determine their own future, and establish an independent Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital. [passage omitted]

Dr. Ghawshah said that he believes that the deliberate Israeli measures are not related to the recent bombings. He said that Israel has pursued this policy in order to keep the Palestinian economy under control and to merge it with the Israeli economy. He gave as a proof Israel's failure so far to implement the economic terms stipulated for the first transitional stage in the Oslo Agreement. Israel has also failed to solve the crossing points issue to facilitate the travel of individuals and goods between the Palestinian territories and Egypt and Jordan. Israel, he said, is still hindering the establishment of a port and an airport in order to continue its domination of 70 to 80 percent of Palestinian trade.

Dr. Ghawshah said that the 28-year-long Israeli occupation has left an economic and social impact that resulted in the destruction of the infrastructure of the Palestinian economy. He noted that the unemployment rate in the Gaza Strip has risen to 51 percent and to 25 percent in the West Bank according to the latest statistics of the Palestinian Statistics Center in November 1995. This is the highest unemployment rate in the world. He said that in the wake of the blockade, border closure, and collective punishment, the unemployment rate rose to 78 percent among the 450,000 Palestinian workers who constitute the bulk of the work force. He said that the Israeli measures are not limited to preventing Palestinians from working inside Israel, but also prevent the export of agricultural and industrial products and, at the same time, preventing imports of the raw materials necessary for the various employment projects. This situation has resulted in increased poverty, social tension, and acts of violence, setting the stage for certain individuals to be drawn into military operations against Israel.

Dr. Ghawshah said that in years past, Israel permitted the employment of 150,000 Palestinian workers, noting that this figure had dropped to 50,000 before the latest closure. Last year alone, the Palestinian territories were closed for a total of 120 days, which will increase the losses of the Palestinian economy to an estimated $2.4 million per day. He said that even though Israel permitted approximately 2,000 Palestinians to work in the Erez industrial area two days ago, according to signed agreements this area is under the Palestinian Authority and 1,200 workers were allowed to work there before the latest closure. He said that there are over 30,000 unemployed Palestinian workers in the Gaza Strip registered with the Palestinian Labor Ministry. He stressed that all the ambitious employment programs worked out by the Labor Ministry are encountering Israeli obstructions. These hurdles have also adversely affected Palestinian and foreign investors, preventing them from implementing projects that would provide job opportunities for Palestinians in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank [passage omitted]

Palestinian Affairs: Hebron Mayor on Israeli Withdrawal, Living Conditions

NC2403083696 Cairo Voice of the Arabs in Arabic
0610 GMT 24 Mar 96

[Telephone interview with Hebron Mayor Mustafa al-Natshah, in Hebron, by 'Adil 'Abd-al-Tawwab in Cairo—recorded; from "Dialogue From Afar"]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] ['Abd-al-Tawwab] We welcome you to this dialogue.

[Al-Natshah] Thank you.

['Abd-al-Tawwab] Mr. Mustafa, are there any indications that Israel will withdraw from the town on the set date?

[Al-Natshah] The Israeli Army officials in Hebron have actually prepared to withdraw from the town as scheduled. They are awaiting the Israeli government's decision. Everything is ready and, as Mr. Shim'on Peres said, the withdrawal could be effected within hours after the decision is made. However, we are awaiting the Israeli prime minister's instructions for the withdrawal.

['Abd-al-Tawwab] Mr. Mustafa, if, as you said, the Israeli Army is ready to withdraw from Hebron, does this mean that the Israeli Government could implement the withdrawal now?

[Al-Natshah] Certainly. There is nothing to prevent the withdrawal from the town. All matters are proceeding well, as in any other town in the West Bank from which the Israeli Army has withdrawn. We, the 200,000 citizens of Hebron, are awaiting the arrival of the Palestinian Authority [PA]. Currently, we are holding a meeting at the Hebron municipal office to beautify and decorate the town preparatory to the PA arrival.

['Abd-al-Tawwab] But Israel made the withdrawal from Hebron contingent on the adoption of stringent security measures by the PA and the arrest of specific persons from Hamas [Islamic Resistance Movement] and the Islamic Jihad. Israel believes the PA has not honored these commitments so far.

[Al-Natshah] This is purely an unjustified excuse by the Israeli Government. Even though certain events occurred in the region before, withdrawals were still effected from most of the West Bank towns. Bloody events have also occurred in Hebron, such as the al-Ibrahimi Mosque massacre committed by [Israeli] settlers. Also, Mr. Yitzhaq Rabin was assassinated in Israel. Therefore, there is no need for this unjustified punishment.

['Abd-al-Tawwab] Is the security situation in Hebron currently under control?

[Al-Nayshah] Certainly. The situation is in order. The citizens, as I said, are awaiting the PA's arrival to end their longstanding suffering.

['Abd-al-Tawwab] Have the living conditions of the Hebronites been affected by the collective punishment adopted by Israel since the events in Jerusalem, Ashqelon, and Tel Aviv?

[Al-Natshah] The living conditions have worsened since the Israeli measures. The workers cannot go to their places of work. Industry has also come to a standstill because the factories can neither bring in raw materials from Israel nor can they sell their products in Israel. Farmers have also been harmed because they cannot sell their products. This is the first time that such measures have been adopted since the 1967 occupation. [passage omitted]

Arab-Israeli Talks

Arab-Israeli Talks: Envoy al-Mu'allim—Syria Rejects Israeli Conditions for Peace Talks

NC2403113496 Paris AFP in English
1049 GMT 24 Mar 96

[Report by Roueida Mabardi]

[FBIS Transcribed Excerpt] Damascus, March 24 (AFP) — The on-off peace negotiations between Israel and Syria hit a new deadlock on Sunday [24 March] as Damascus officially rejected Israeli conditions for resuming talks.

The talks in Maryland in the United States have been suspended by Israel since February at the start of a wave of Islamic militant bombings in the Jewish state which claimed 62 lives. But Syria's chief negotiator Walid al-Mu'allim told AFP by telephone from Washington: "It is impossible to resume them (the talks) under conditions.

"The Israelis have informed us of the halt of the talks via the intermediary of the Americans and if they decide to resume them they will inform the American sponsors. The Syrian leadership will then study the issue."

On Wednesday [20 March] Israeli Prime Minister Shim'on Peres warned Damascus the talks were in jeopardy unless Syria used its influence to rein in attacks by Hizballah guerrillas against Israeli troops in southern Lebanon. Six soldiers have died in the Israeli-occupied border strip since the start of March and more than 20 others have been wounded in a sudden flare-up of violence. "One of the conditions for signing a peace accord with Syria is a halt to the Hizballah operations in Lebanon," Peres said on Wednesday.

"Yes, Hizballah is dependent on Iran but the Syrians can contain it. They are mistaken if they think they can use it to pressure Israel in the peace negotiations."

The United States has also asked Syria to try to curb the attacks in Lebanon, where Damascus remains the main foreign power broker and retains 35,000 troops. But Damascus maintains it is a political problem which will be resolved once Israel withdraws from the narrow border strip it has occupied in Lebanon since 1985.

Al-Mu'allim, who is also Syrian ambassador to the United States, said he met on Wednesday in Washington with U.S. State Department Middle East coordinator Dennis Ross "on the situation in southern Lebanon."

"The Americans believe that reducing the tension is in the interests of all the parties, so they have been in contact with the Lebanese and Syrian governments as well as with Israel," he said.

Israel has also urged Syria to condemn the suicide attacks in the Jewish state between February 25 and March 4 which were carried out by the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) and the Islamic Jihad, and to close down Damascus offices of Palestinian hardline groups.

Peace negotiations between Israel and Syria have made little progress since they were launched at the Madrid peace conference in October 1991. And they only resumed in December in a deal painstakingly brokered by U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher. [passage omitted]

The Syrian daily AL-BA'TH said: "The fact that no new date has been fixed for the negotiations shows that the government of Shim'on Peres is taking a step backward before peace.

"It is a bad sign which perhaps announces Israel's withdrawal from the peace process."

Meanwhile, al-Mu'allim hinted that Syria would boycott the first follow-up session of a Summit of the Peacemakers held in Egypt on March 13 saying Israel had "violated the principles of Madrid by giving priority to security instead of peace." Syrian President Hafiz al-Asad refused an invitation to attend the summit in the Red Sea resort of Sharm al-Shaykh called after the suicide bombings, and proposed instead a new Madrid conference.

"We reject all actions aimed at implementing clauses of the summit's final declaration which gave its backing to Israel to the detriment of the Arabs," al-Mu'allim said, referring to the follow-up talks due in Washington on Thursday and Friday.

Arab-Israeli Talks: Jordan's Prince Hasan, al-Kabariti Meet Israel's Beilin

TA2503112296 Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in Hebrew 1100 GMT 25 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Jordan's Crown Prince Hasan and Prime Minister Shim'on Peres will meet before Mr. Peres leaves for the United States next month. This was decided in a phone call held by the two men after Prince Hasan's meeting with Minister Yosi Beilin in Amman. Our correspondent Arye Gus reports that Beilin also conferred with Jordanian Prime Minister 'Abd-al-Karim al-Kabariti. Issues pertaining to the war on terror and the closure as well as economic matters were discussed during Beilin's visit. Minister Beilin is on his way back to Israel.

Algeria

Algeria: Islamist Attack on Bus Kills 10

*LD2303100396 Paris LCI Television in French
0930 GMT 23 Mar 96*

[FBIS Translated Text] In Algeria, 10 people were killed last Wednesday [20 March] when a bus was attacked by an armed Islamist group, the daily EL WATAN reports this morning. The bus was travelling from Oran to Hassi Messaoud, where the country's most important oil complex is located.

Algeria: Bus Bombing Link to GIA Threat Considered

*LD2303114196 Paris France-Inter Radio Network
in French 1100 GMT 23 Mar 96*

[FBIS Translated Text] The Algerian daily EL WATAN said this morning that ten civilians were killed last Wednesday when the bus travelling from Oran to Hassi Messaoud came under fire 400 km south of Algiers. Twenty passengers were also wounded, some very seriously.

It is not known whether the people on the bus were oil industry workers. The Islamic Armed Group, GIA, has on several occasions threatened to attack oil workers if they did not give up their jobs in the industry.

Algeria: Customs Officer Killed in Algiers

*LD2403141796 Algiers Radio Algiers Network
in Arabic 1200 GMT 24 Mar 96*

[FBIS Translated Text] A security services statement today announced that Rabah Allali, senior customs inspector and official at the training department of the customs general directorate was assassinated by armed criminals today at 0750 [0650 GMT] outside his house in the El-Hayat district, Gue De Constantine, Algiers. Rabah Allali was 56 year-old, married and had 10 children.

Algeria: FIS European Supporters Issue Newsletter

*MS2203144996 Southall THE ENLIGHTENMENT
in English 19 Mar 96*

[Newsletter "publicizing the Islamic Struggle in Algeria," published by Islamic Salvation Front "supporters in Europe" — quotation marks as received; double parentheses denote source's use of brackets; received via Internet]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Editorial:

Right priorities for the Generals, Wrong priorities for Algeria!

In countries where sovereignty is in the hands of their own people by way of real and authentic deputation, all major internal and external policies are based on the interest of the said country as a whole. However, in an "abnormal" situations where the interest of a country as a whole become synonymous of the interests of small and influential groups, planing and policies become based on a different set of priorities than that of the above situation. No matter how crafty the groups in power may be, they can not hide for ever through demagogy or something else, the fact that they are after their own interests which in many cases are bound to diverge from that of the country or its people as a whole.

Since the military coup d'Etat of January 1992, Algeria has been living a situation where decisions and policies taken by those in command, are all derived from the clear objective of eternalising as long as possible the army Generals gripes on power. In this kind of "logic", the military regime has shown that it is prepared to "push its property" (Algeria) in the arms of "the devil" if necessary in order to preserve its actual status while at the same time accusing its opponents of wanting to "internationalise the Algerian internal conflict".

The military coup d'Etat of january 92 has been a very costly one in all aspects. Trying to build some kind of legitimacy on the top of this "unrepaired" historical injustice is not a "rupture" with the past at all. It is a faithful continuity of the path set up by the irresponsible act of January 92. This path can not have other ends except that of an economical bankruptcy leading to its natural conclusion of an unpredictable popular "explosion".

How can it be different when higher and higher proportion of the total hard currency income (including loans) are "eaten up" by a repressive apparatus which classical job of suppressing people legitimate political, social and cultural demands, is doubled with an endless war? It is hard to see that Algeria's interests are being defended when those in power have been trading natural resources for some international recognition of the illegitimacy issued from the military coup of january 92! It is hard to see that Algeria's interests are preserved when those in power are distributing preferential business status to who ever is willing to join them in their war against the people reaction to the brutal suppression of their free choice! Algeria would have been very well off politically, economically and socially without the coup d'Etat. Only the Nomenklatura would have lost some!

The mediocrity in dealing with the problems of Algeria has been the general rule in every sphere of the social live.

The absence of political vision, courage and will to bring Algeria in peace with itself can only presage uncertainty for the future of not only that country but the whole region as tensions between neighbouring countries can in some cases reach unsustainable levels.

As for the economy of the country, the (mis) managers brought by the military have found nothing better to say than LITERALLY LYING. [as published]

The "fabricated parliament" whose members have all been designated by the pushiest Generals, have lately been disregarding as pure lies, the fictitious economical figures testified by the government lead by prime minister Sifi. Mr Sifi was transferred two months ago with "due honours" to a more influential position within Gen. Zeroual's inner circle of staff. Nevertheless, most of Mr Sifi's ministers are still holding the same positions in the new government lead by the actual prime minister Ouyahia. This shows how unethical the practice of governing has become since January 92. There is no need to try to understand why the "designated" members of the fabricated "parliament" have decided to "lift up their heads from the regime's bowl of soup" and reveal to the Algerian people that they have been duped, particularly at a time when the "legislative elections's bells" are starting to ring!

Prime minister Ouyahia's show has started just two months ago and he already has "one feet stuck in the hole" because of the workers anger. The crisis with the workers concerning the cut off of their wages is not yet solved despite the substantial set back of Mr Ouyahia.

Mr Ouyahyia seems to have learned something and has decided not to take on his own "normal size" shoulders all of Algeria's problems. In the presentation this week of his government's "program", Mr Ouyahia took the precaution of telling the members of the fabricated "parliament" that his program is derived from Gen. Zeroual's electoral program" which according to Mr Ouyahia has "amazed" the Algeria people who decided to adopt it in November 95. Mr Ouyahyia is saying to anybody who wants to criticise his "plan": "you mess with me, you mess with General Zeroual and the whole Algerian people!". Mr Ouyahia uses many quotations from General Zeroual's electoral manifesto trying to convince the people that it is a program even if it has no elementary figures such as how much it will cost, how long it will take, how long it will last, from where they get the money... If Mr Ouyahia takes a mixture of electoral declarations such as "I will be the president of all Algerians and will make every one of you very happy for the rest of his/her life" as a program, then Algeria will be looking at Mr Sifi with relatively less bitterness when Mr Ouyahia's time is over.

One can also elaborate on the other spheres and show that they also have been obeying the same perverted rules of priorities. This space does not allow to elaborate about the social and even cultural spheres where since January 92, the regime has established policies that serve its own interest rather than that of the country as a whole. Is it in the interest of Algeria that "unproductive" people who defend the regime are best "rewarded" from Algeria's resources? The more one defends the regime the higher his/her remuneration. What are the macroeconomical consequences of such politically oriented "employment market" at a time when "free market economy" is almost becoming a second national anthem? Things are not different in the cultural field, the more antagonistic to Islam an artistic expression is the more doors to the big public and media are opened up to the artist.

Algeria has a clear political problem. It has to look at it "straight in the eyes" and solve it once and for all. Otherwise there can not be any economical, social or cultural progress and any changes in those spheres can only lead to situations contrary to the Algerian people aspirations because "the beginning of the road" was based on someone else's interests!

News of Jihad and Mujahedeen!

"To those against whom war is made, permission is given (to fight) because they are wronged, and verily, Allah is Most powerful for their aid" ((Koran, Surat Al Hajj,22:39))

"we don't like to " beat around the bush ", we prefer clarity and frankness even if it means to be hanged for what we believe to be a duty and a right. The struggle against the regime of the military junta has become a legitimate and lawful duty as demonstrated previously, in order to "grab" the right of the people to freely choose. " ((Shaykh Abu Abdelfatah ALI BELHADJ in "Fasl el kalam fi mouajahate dolm el hokam" ("The conclusive criterion in confronting injustice from the rulers "). page 303. Book written from cell No 09 in the Blida Military jail. 1992))

Chlef: The Mujahedeen of the Islamic Salvation Army (AIS) has set up an ambush to a motorised patrol of Gendarmes near the locality of Taouirat. Four gendarmes have perished in the operation.

Algiers: On the 25/02/96 and in an ambush set up by the Mujahedeen near the locality of El Biar, three army high officers have perished on their way to the defense ministry headquarters. The three officers are: colonel Sebti, colonel Berahal and captain Lezhar.

Batna: Four Mujahedeen have won martyrdom Insha Allah after a military operation set up by the AIS in which 17 gendarmes have perished between the town of Batna and Barika.

Ghelizan: In a clash which lasted two days between the Mujahedeen of the AIS and an army unite, 14 Mujahedeen were killed (may Allah accept them as martyrs) and 64 army soldiers has perished.

Collo: An armed militia men was killed at the beginning of last week near the locality of Ziatouna. In another operation the AIS mujahedeen have launched an attack against a armed militia centre in the locality of Kanouaa. Many of them have perished.

Algiers: Three soldiers have perished in the locality of Diar Djemaa.

Constantine: The Mujahedeen of the AIS have launched many military operations in divers locations of Constantine. Two soldiers and seven armed militia are reported to have died.

Oued Rhio: In a clash between the Mujahedeen of the AIS and a motorised unite of Gendarmes, a "Toyota" military vehicle and its passengers was hit by an RPG rocket.

On the information front!

Last week, "The Enlightenment" has mention a new publication that came to the scene and was also dealing with the Islamic struggle in Algeria. The theses of the publications have been speedily echoed by news agencies traditionally known to have been opposing the Islamist struggle in Algeria since the beginning. This has "rang few old bells" and motivated the following clarifications.

These newsagencies reported wrongly that the name of the new publication was AL-INQADH which is of course a publication from the Islamic Salvation Army unites. The new publication real name is "AL ANFAL" and it is at its fifth issue. However, the editor is not new and has been until recently one of the principal writer in "AL ANSAR" publication where he specialised in attacking the FIS and its jailed shuwukh Abbassi Madani And Ali Belhadj in an article...30 issues long!!! After more than six months of continuous "bombarding" against the FIS and its leaders, one wonders why in the new publication, Abbassi Madani and Ali Belhadj are once more praised just as in the early days of "AL ANSAR". One can only be very cautious when such publication calls for the Mujahedeen who have dissociate themselves from the [illegible]A to form a new banner.

It is not a secret that General Tewfik team is interest in the formation of an other GIA. The regime secret police (la S.M) is now intervening in the maquis trying to affect the balances of forces and weaken the Mujahedeen to its advantage. Report of military planes taking off from the Boufarik base with cases of armament to be dropped in some maquis is not a secret any more. This operation has been coordinated by central authority in Algiers while local authorities such as local army and gendarmery had no idea of what was going on. Few containers landed in some villages and when the gendarmery was contacted they asked the dwellers to open the cases themselves and to report what was inside. The gendarmes was afraid this was some kind of a trap. The case was full of Kalashnikoves. Indeed the secret police is not interested in seeing the Mujahedeen putting their arguments clearly and without injustice. The only exit la S.M wants for those ex-GIA mujahedeen is to be the "new- GIA" fighters.

In last issue of "AL-ANFAL", the ex-"AL ANSAR" author says in page 3: (("...indeed if contradictions and deceits such as those performed by the AL ANSAR publication have touched any other publication that respects itself in any part of the world it would have disappeared from existence. This talk leads to a very important observation that has attracted our attention. It is the way this group (AL ANSAR) treats information concerning big events such as bombs explosions and the killing of the regime symbols etc... The information presented in this publication concerning big events are exactly the same as those related by the renegade regime in the first place and by the commercial media. Not an "ant" more)) The author continues: ((What is left for us is to ask the "Khawarij" group: "if the operations which are announced by the regime are of your own make so why do you base your reports on exactly the same information given by the regime concerning the details such as the time, the means , the number of casualties?". This question is in itself enough to put a big question mark about all operations which have been revindicated by this group. And it seems that all those military operations information denuded from any credibility are a part of a campaign of deception to show that the group is still as solid and can last while the reality is totally opposed.)) [end of quotation] One can add that it is an Islamic duty to inform the muslims about anyone who wants to deceit them particularly with issues related to the highest duty in Islam...but AS SOON AS IT IS KNOWN [as published] so that the act will be for the sake of Allah only and not for personal revenge or any other personal consideration. May Allah give victory to Jihad and sincere Mujahedeen. Amine.

The military regime in Algeria accuses also the US state department of lying!

Following a recent US state department's report on Human rights violation in Algeria, the military regime foreign ministry has "summon" the US ambassador in Algeria in protest of what it calls "non-documented allegations". The regime has this past few months "summon" many foreign ambassadors in protestation for this or that as was the case of the Swedish and South African recently. This practice has become a part of the propagada show. After four years of barbaric behaviour against the Algerian people, the regime still think it can wipe out evidence behind the crime. Many photographies evidence have been smuggled out of Algeria which "documentate" amply the atrocity of the regime.

Going back to the state department report, it is still far away from the painful reality and does contain many inaccuracies to say the least, detrimental to the Islamist cause in general and the FIS in particular. These type of "inaccuracies" are inevitable when the regime becomes the US department of State sole source of information concerning the political side of the "Algerian story". The report also misrepresent the legitimate armed struggle by describing it by "seeking the overthrow of the Government and the imposition of a fundamentalist Islamic state", while aggreing that it was induced by the military coup of January 92. The armed struggle has never been the choice of the Islamists in general and the FIS in particular on the countrary. Despite this and others, "The Enlightenment" would like to publish to its readers the integrality of the report so they can judge for themselves! Because of the report length, its publication will be spread over few weeks Insha Allah.

Egypt

Egypt: Mubarak on Sharm al-Shaykh Summit, Domestic Issues

NC2403222296 Cairo MENA in Arabic 2105 GMT 24 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Cairo, 24 Mar (MENA)—President Husni Mubarak has stressed that the Sharm al-Shaykh peacemakers conference rescued the Middle East peace process, renewed its course, and gave it a boost. He noted that the crisis between the Palestinians and the Israelis had reached its peak as a result of violence and counterviolence.

In a statement to be published tomorrow in the weekly MAYU, mouthpiece of the ruling National Democratic Party, President Mubarak said: Egypt always looks far ahead, does its best to solve problems, and tries by all means to ease tension.

We always monitor positions and analyze developments, he said. He stressed that the huge gathering at the peacemakers summit in Egypt portrayed to the world a bright picture of Egypt's political weight, status, and influence in regional and international events.

President Mubarak said the peacemakers summit set broadlines to save the peace process and adopted specific measures that ensure the interests and joint security of the Palestinians and the Israelis. He said these measures will be followed up during the meetings of the followup committee in Washington.

He added: Things have largely calmed down in the region after the summit, and the situation has started to relax. We are in constant touch with the Palestinians and Israelis to follow up events and surmount obstacles. We only hope that confidence will be restored between the two sides and that each side will refrain from taking positions or measures that harm the other so that things can proceed normally, the peace process can continue, and the agreements between the two sides can be implemented.

President Mubarak stressed that the summit produced other results of great importance to Egypt. It clearly showed that the country enjoys security and stability, he said, noting that the leaders who attended the summit traveled freely and confidently in the land of Egypt. This bright picture increased the touristic value of Egypt in general and of Sharm al-Shaykh in particular, he said. He noted a great demand by tour operators and said huge contracts were signed with the hotels and tourist resorts of the area until the end of the season.

President Mubarak reaffirmed that no new burdens or taxes will be imposed on citizens and that workers' rights will not be harmed under any circumstances. He said companies are being privatized in accordance with carefully studied criteria and a farsighted policy that considers the workers' financial and moral rights.

He said: We are doing everything in our capacity to reduce the state budget deficit. Our basic weapon here is to emphasize the need to increase production, encourage investment, increase exports, and open new markets in the world.

He added: All our efforts are meant to serve citizens by creating job opportunities, increasing growth rates, curbing unemployment, providing social and health care, providing educational opportunities, and improving wages.

On the new draft press law, President Mubarak said the committee that drew up the draft law consisted of representatives of all concerned parties without exception. He added: I was eager for this so that the law will be balanced, guaranteeing the freedom, security, and safety of journalists and the rights of society and individuals. From the very beginning, I called for issuing this law to support the freedom of expression and to back writers.

He added: Just as we are concerned about the freedom of expression and the freedom of the press and journalists, we are also eager to safeguard citizens' honor and private life as stipulated by the law and the Constitution. The new draft law will be presented to the Consultative Council within days.

The president recounted the story of a citizen who complained to him that he could not afford the physical, psychological, and financial trouble of traveling to Cairo to treat his son, who is suffering from cancer. The president said: I was moved by the story of this simple citizen, which, undoubtedly is the story of hundreds and thousands of people like him in Upper Egypt. He added: I immediately ordered that a center for cancer treatment be established in Asyut to serve the people of Upper Egypt and spare them the trouble of traveling to Cairo. I did not stop at that; I ordered the establishment of specialized institutes to treat similar diseases in Upper Egypt. We are turning special attention to the sons of this region. In order to speed up the establishment of these institutes and the provision of the necessary financial and technical resources for them, I will personally follow up this matter to ensure that things are proceeding normally.

Egypt: PA's 'Urayqat Meets Musa, Comments on Summit Resolutions

NC2403140996 Cairo Arab Republic of Egypt Radio Network in Arabic 1230 GMT 24 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Foreign Minister 'Amr Musa met today with Dr. Sa'ib 'Urayqat, minister of local government in the Palestinian Authority [PA]. Afterward, Ambassador Nabil Fahmi, political adviser to the foreign minister, met with Sa'ib 'Urayqat.

Following the two meetings, 'Urayqat said he had met with Minister Musa on instructions from Palestinian President Yasir 'Arafat. The aim, he added, was to coordinate stands between Egypt and Palestine in following up on the recommendations passed by the summit of peacemakers in Sharm al-Shaykh.

'Urayqat added that the preparatory conference, due to be held in Washington on 28 and 29 March at the level of political and security experts, will follow up on the implementation of the Sharm al-Shaykh summit resolutions. The summit, he noted, focused on four clear main recommendations: supporting the peace process, supporting the Palestinian-Israeli accords, supporting the implementation of these accords, and resuming the (?suspended) talks with the Israeli side. In addition, he added, the summit focused on backing the Palestinian people's vital and local demands, supporting peace on other tracks, achieving a comprehensive peace, and dealing with terrorism as a regional and world phenomenon.

He said: We want the United States and all countries of the world to realize that the Palestinians are seeking to implement the Sharm al-Shaykh summit recommendations and that they reject the possible selectivity on the part of the U.S. Administration, Israel, or others on certain resolutions passed by this summit.

He added: The Sharm al-Shaykh summit's recommendations are an inseparable whole. Thus our meeting today with Mr. Musa was to coordinate stands in light of the deteriorating conditions in Palestine and the continuing policy of collective punishment, repression, demolition of houses, and threats to resume detentions and suspend the implementation of their accords with Palestinians.

Egypt: Musa, PA's 'Urayqat Comment Further on Summit, U.S. Stand

NC2403195096 Cairo MENA in Arabic 1555 GMT 24 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Cairo, 24 Mar (MENA)—Foreign Minister 'Amr Musa emphasized that the current discussions and contacts between countries that participated in the peacemakers summit in Sharm al-Shaykh aim to ensure that meetings of the working group entrusted with following up the implementation of the summit's resolutions, due to be held in Washington on 28 and 29 March, are a good and sincere follow-up of the summit's communique.

He noted that if there is selectivity on the clauses of the Sharm al-Shaykh communique, this practice has to be avoided immediately.

He said he met today with Sa'ib 'Urayqat, minister of local government in the Palestinian National Authority [PA] and U.S. envoy Tony Frishtanding [name as transliterated]. Then, Musa added, Sa'ib 'Urayqat met with the U.S. envoy on my request, because the Palestinians have their own view, which Egypt sees as absolutely reasonable.

Musa said the Egyptian view is that both the Palestinians and Israelis must be helped equally in maintaining peace and resuming and protecting the peace process. In his statements, Musa added that invitations to attend the Washington meeting have been sent out to all parties that participated in the Sharm al-Shaykh summit and that no party has been excluded.

He clarified that, in light of the results of the Washington meetings, a ministerial-level meeting could be held within two weeks after the follow-up committee's meeting, after which each minister will submit a report to his head of state.

Commenting on the make-up of the Egyptian delegation that will participate in the Washington meetings, Musa said the delegation is currently being formed.

Dr. Sa'ib 'Urayqat, minister of local government in the PA, met today with the U.S. envoy Tony Frishtanding. They discussed differences in views on the agenda of the follow-up committee that will convene at the level of experts in Washington.

Afterward, Dr. 'Urayqat said there is full coordination and agreement between Egyptian and Palestinian views on the Sharm al-Shaykh communique and its clauses will be followed up at the Washington meetings. He added: We reject the selectivity the U.S. side insists on regarding the Sharm al-Shaykh communique. We will not allow the U.S. side to do that.

'Urayqat was asked about the Israeli measures against Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza. He replied that Israel's measures of demolishing houses and arresting Palestinians represent the highest degree of organized terrorism. He added that he informed the U.S. side of this today, because these Israeli measures are provocative and do not serve peace, nor are they consistent with the spirit of the peacemakers summit in Sharm al-Shaykh.

Egypt: Musa—Israeli Collective Punishment Causes Frustration

NC2303212496 Cairo MENA in Arabic
1950 GMT 23 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Cairo, 23 Mar (MENA) — Foreign Minister 'Amr Musa has described Israel's excuses for not withdrawing from Hebron as incomprehensible.

In remarks he made this evening, Musa said: We are all against obstructing Israel's withdrawal from Hebron. We are also against a deceptive withdrawal. He noted that the recent acts of violence not only gave Israel an excuse to suspend the withdrawal but also could make President Yasir 'Arafat frustrated, which would not be in anyone's interest.

Musa called on the Palestinian internal opposition to act as a political opposition so that violence may not undermine the peace process for which there is no alternative.

Asked if attempts are being made to end the Israeli siege on the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza, Musa said: The siege must be stopped and lifted. He added: We are against whatever may harm the economy or the conditions of citizens in the West Bank and Gaza. The question of the siege on the Palestinian people must come to an end, and this is something which all of us will try to make sure will not recur.

Musa affirmed his rejection of the collective punishment of the Palestinians, noting that this will have extremely negative repercussions. He pointed out that representatives of the countries taking part in the recent Sharm al-Shaykh peacemakers' summit all emphasized that as much as they acknowledged Israel's right to protect its citizens, they never called for collective punishment of the Palestinians.

When asked about the relation between the Sharm al-Shaykh summit and the $100 million that Israel received from the United States, Musa said: This issue is not substantially related to the summit that was convened because of the threats to the peace process. Musa noted that the use of violence, the public mood resulting from the nonimplementation of the peace agreements, and provocation by one party to the peace process through the construction of the settlements or a delay in implementing the agreements lead to frustration, which creates a suitable situation for acts of violence. He stressed that safeguarding the peace process cannot be attained by demanding that one party take specific measures without demanding the other party doing the same thing. He added that the demands must be consistent because the obligations are the same.

Musa added: If we want to properly safeguard the peace process, all parties must cooperate, fulfill their obligations, and respect what they have signed because any tipping of the balance in favor of one part at the expense of the other will lead to frustration, resistance, and confrontation.

He stressed that the use of violence and terrorism is rejected by all communities, adding that all parties must give peace a chance. He noted that committees emanating from the summit of peacemakers will meet in Washington at the end of this month to discuss how to safeguard the peace process.

Regarding talks on the Syrian-Israeli track, Musa noted that this track has many requirements. He added: In my opinion, this track is not closed. What happened was some sort of a slowing down because there are several factors involved in this issue. Musa hopes that the negotiations on this track and on the Lebanese track will resume because they are very important. He added that whatever leads to Israel's withdrawal from the occupied territories as well as the restoration of the rights to its owners serves the interests of the Arab side.

Egypt: Foreign Ministry Spokesman Criticizes Israeli Practices

NC2403102696 Cairo MENA in Arabic
0957 GMT 24 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Cairo, 24 Mar (MENA)—Egypt is following with deep concern Israel's oppressive measures and collective punishment of the Palestinian people. The Israeli practices run counter to the provisions of international law and cause further tension between the Palestinian and Israeli peoples, which could negatively affect the peace process.

A spokesman for the Egyptian Foreign Ministry stated that Egypt finds these measures unacceptable and calls on Israel to stop them. The spokesman urged Israel to abide by the spirit of the Sharm al-Shaykh summit in calling for safeguarding the Middle East peace process, promoting security in the region, and combating violence and terrorism so that the interests of all parties will be served and peace and security will be established in the region.

Egypt: Papers on 'Flare-Up' in Lebanon, Israeli Practices

NC2503105596 Cairo MENA in English
0730 GMT 25 Mar 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Cairo, March 25 (MENA)—AL-AHRAM commented in its editorial today on the situation in Lebanon and said a flare-up is erupting on a large scale in South Lebanon.

This is coming in the wake of a relative freeze of conditions on the Palestinian-Israeli arena that followed a period of high tension, whose repercussions are continuing, due to acts of violence and counter violence, the paper noted.

Whereas expectations early in the year were that the Lebanese scene would see calm resulting from the apparent progress on the Syrian-Israeli track through the Maryland negotiations, with questions being put about the future of Lebanese Hizballah (party of God), eruptions went off again in South Lebanon due to many things.

These developments included a settlement deadlock, with the last day marking unusual acts of violence and counter-violence compared to acts seen over the past few months, AL-AHRAM said editorially.

This requires the adoption of an attitude, like the one adopted through the Sharm al-Shaykh summit, towards the two tracks related to conditions in South Lebanon, the paper said.

Whereas acts of violence may lead to a relative peace process stalemate, a deadlock imposed on the process may also lead to acts of violence, the paper added.

This is because the peaceful settlement to the Arab-Israeli conflict, is no longer tolerating stalemate suspension, stoppage or impediment as the present common terms go, AL-AHRAM said.

This brings in the necessity of thinking about separating effects of election processes in some countries concerned from the requirements of the settlement itself, the paper noted. Otherwise, tension is not going to cease, the paper added.

AL-AKHBAR dealt editorially with the situation in the Palestinian self-rule areas and said the theory of collective punishment, upheld and quickly applied by the government of Israel on Palestinians for any incident claiming Israeli life, dates back to old times.

This was the practice when human life was invaluable without the protection of rights, systems and laws, the paper said.

Israel's resort to the method of collective punishment in Palestinian lands is thus marking a return of the old era of barbarism which was a lawless era, AL-AKHBAR said.

It stands as an evidence of the Israeli authorities' lust for revenge, which is marking a return to the law of the jungle, the paper noted.

Israel is then forgetting, or feigning to forget, that it came into being through horrible operations of terrorism, the paper added.

Egypt: Musa Returns From Asian Tour, Comments

NC2303160696 Cairo Arab Republic of Egypt Radio Network in Arabic 1500 GMT 23 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Foreign Minister 'Amr Musa and the delegation accompanying him have returned to Cairo following a seven-day tour that took them to South Korea, Malaysia, and Thailand.

Upon his arrival, Musa said that he will submit a detailed report to President Mubarak on the outcome of the talks he held with the heads of these states and the messages he delivered to them.

He added that the heads of the three states invited President Mubarak to visit their countries and that he conveyed President Mubarak's invitation to these leaders to visit Egypt.

'Amr Musa said that he will report to the prime minister on the outcome of his tour at the next cabinet meeting.

Musa remarked that his Asian tour was one of the most important visits he made in the past few years in view of the economic and political impact it will have on Egypt's relations with these countries in the future.

Egypt: Al-Baz Leaves for U.S., To Address Middle East Seminar

NC2403125496 Cairo MENA in Arabic
1125 GMT 24 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Cairo, 24 Mar (MENA)—Dr. Usamah al-Baz, Foreign Ministry first under secretary and director of the President's Office for Political Affairs, left Cairo for the United States today on a visit to last several days.

Dr. al-Baz is due to address the International Affairs Council in southern California about Egypt's role in the new Middle East that took shape amidst international events in the past five years, beginning with the USSR's collapse, the effects of the Gulf war, and the peace talks between Israel and the Arab countries.

Dr. al-Baz will also talk about Egypt's role in the peace process and ways of opening channels of economic and cultural cooperation between the Middle East and the rest of the world.

Egypt: Libya Said To Seal Off Area Following Escape by Prisoners

NC2503114096 Paris AFP in English
1041 GMT 25 Mar 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Al-Sallum, Egypt, March 25 (AFP)—Libyan security forces on Monday [25 March] sealed off the mountainous region of Dirna where 400 escaped Islamic prisoners have been holed up for five days, travellers at this border post said.

"The region is cut off from the rest of the world and telephone lines have been cut to prevent any communication with outside," one traveller arriving at the Libyan-Egyptian border said.

Travellers said Sunday that 16 soldiers had been killed in clashes with 400 escaped prisoners from Benghazi jail in eastern Libya.

They said the prisoners had seized automatic weapons from soldiers and were in control of part of the coast road between Benghazi and the border post of Musa'id, which is on the opposite side of the border from al-Sallum.

According to Libyans crossing the border Monday, the prisoners belong to an Islamic fundamentalist group which once had the backing of Libyan leader Mu'ammar al-Qadhdhafi before he turned on them two years ago and confiscated their arms.

Al-Qadhdhafi has since repeatedly condemned Muslim fundamentalists, who he has said deserve to "die without trial, like dogs."

Egypt: Cypriot Justice Minister Begins Visit

NC2303174496 Cairo MENA in Arabic
2240 GMT 22 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Cairo, 22 Mar (MENA) — Cypriot Justice and Public Order Minister Alexandros Evangelou and his delegation arrived in Cairo tonight for a several day official visit.

Egyptian-Cypriot talks are due to begin tomorrow, Saturday [23 March], under the chairmanship of Egyptian Interior Minister Hasan al-Alfi and Minister Evangelou. The discussions will focus on extending cooperation in various security fields, particularly in the fight against terrorism and the extradition of criminals.

Egypt: Interior Minister Meets Cypriot Justice Minister

NC2303182196 Cairo MENA in Arabic
1530 GMT 23 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Cairo, 23 Mar (MENA) — Interior Minister Hasan al-Alfi met today with Cypriot Minister of Justice and Public Order Alexandros Evangelou. They reviewed areas for cooperation between the police and security forces in the two countries in the context of the security cooperation protocol the two sides signed earlier.

The two ministers exchanged views on security issues that concern both sides. They discussed ways to consolidate and develop cooperation between the security services in both countries in fighting violent crime, terrorism, drug smuggling, and counterfeiting. They also discussed how the Cypriot police can benefit from the training courses the Egyptian Ministry of Interior offers to police cadres.

Al-Alfi noted the efforts the Egyptian security service made to control terrorism, as well as the international efforts in that context. He underlined the need for consolidated international efforts to fight this phenomenon and track its perpetrators.

Libya

Libya: Talks With Russia Open 24 Mar

LD2403155596 Tripoli Voice of Greater Arab Homeland in Arabic 1230 GMT 24 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] The Arab Libyan-Russian talks opened this morning to discuss prospects of bilateral ties and means of bolstering cooperation between the two friendly countries, the Great Jamahiriyah [Libya] and Russia.

The brother secretary for the General People's Committee [ministry] for Planning, Economy and Trade and from the Russian side, Oleg Davydov, the Russian deputy prime minister, and his delegation participated in the meeting. Present at the talks also were the brother assistant secretary in charge of international cooperation at the General People's Committee for Planning, Economy and Trade and a number of experts and technicians from various sectors on both sides.

The brother secretary for the General People's Committee for Planning, Economy and Trade opened the session with a speech in which he welcomed the Russian delegation on the soil of the Great Jamahiriyah. He pointed out that the talks came within the framework of preparation for cooperation working program between the Great Jamahiriyah and Russia in various economic, technical and trade fields and to push bilateral cooperation forward for wider prospects.

Oleg Davydov delivered a speech in which he expressed his country's desire to develop and enhance cooperation relations with the Great Jamahiriyah to attain common interest for the two friendly countries.

The talks will focus on means of bolstering economic, trade and technical cooperation between the two friendly countries, the Great Jamahiriyah and Russia.

Libya: Al-Qadhdhafi Meets With Russia's Davydov

LD2303175996 Tripoli JANA in Arabic 1720 GMT 23 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Tripoli, 23 Mar — The brother leader of the revolution has received Russian Deputy Prime Minister Oleg Davydov, who conveyed to him a written message from Russian President Boris Yeltsin renewing Russia's support for the Great Jamahiriyah in the face of the unjust measures imposed by the so-called the Security Council against it. He also reiterated the need for closer relations between the two friendly countries.

At the meeting, the brother leader pointed out the chaos in the world today and reiterated the need for a joint action in order to guarantee the right of peoples and check the hegemony of imperialism.

The brother leader asked the Russian deputy prime minister to convey his greetings to Russian President Boris Yeltsin.

The meeting was attended by the brother secretary of the General People's Committee for Foreign Liaison and International Cooperation, and the brother secretary of the General People's Committee for Planning, Economy and Trade; members of the Russian delegation also attended the meeting.

Libya: Prime Minister Meets With Russia's Davydov

LD2303115096 Tripoli JANA in Arabic 1050 GMT 23 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Tripoli, 23 Mar — The brother secretary of the General People's Committee [prime minister] this morning met with Oleg Davydov, Russian deputy prime minister and minister of foreign economic relations, who is currently visiting the Great Jamahiriyah.

During the meeting, which was attended by the brother secretary of the General People's Committee for Planning, Economy, and Trade, they discussed bilateral cooperation and ways of bolstering and developing them in various fields between the two friendly countries, the Great Jamahiriyah and Russia.

Libya: Foreign Liaison Secretary Meets With Russia's Davydov

LD2303190196 Tripoli Voice of Greater Arab Homeland in Arabic 1815 GMT 23 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] The brother secretary of the General People's Committee for Foreign Liaison and International Cooperation this morning conferred with Oleg Davydov, the visiting Russian deputy prime minister. They examined at the meeting aspects of cooperation between the Great Jamahiriyah and Russia and the means of bolstering them in the common interest of the two friendly countries. [passage omitted]

Libya: Tripoli Rejects Western Communique on Sanctions

LD2203144096 Tripoli JANA in Arabic 1230 GMT 22 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] New York, 22 Mar (JANA) — The Great Jamahiriyah said yesterday that it totally rejects the communique issued by three Western states following their review of the unjust sanctions imposed on the Libyan Arab people.

In a statement issued yesterday, the Great Jamahiriyah's mission to the United Nations stressed that the communique revealed the stubbornness of those states and their insistence on obstructing the general trend of the majority of members of the UN Security Council who express at every review their appreciation of the flexibility shown by the Great Jamahiriyah in trying to reach a just and peaceful solution to the problem.

Most members also stress their support for the Arab League's proposal for a trial of the two [Lockerbie] suspects at the International Court of Justice before Scottish judges and in accordance with Scottish law. That proposal was supported by the Non-Aligned Movement, the OAU, and the Organization of Islamic Conference because it is the only practical proposal which can end the dispute peacefully as it takes into consideration the interests of all parties.

The statement added: The attempt by the three Western states to accuse the Great Jamahiriyah of terrorism has become clear to the whole world. The Great Jamahiriyah has repeatedly announced its condemnation of terrorism in all its forms. It also challenged those states to provide one single piece of evidence which backs up their allegations. The whole world knows that the Great Jamahiriyah was a victim of continuous American terrorism. It was not sufficient for the United States to provoke the Great Jamahiriyah inside its territorial waters but in 1986 insolently sent hundreds of warplanes at night to bomb Libya's cities in blatant defiance of international legality and despite condemnation of the peoples of the whole world.

The statement pointed out that the attempt to link the Jamahiriyah with the events of the Palestinian resistance against Israeli occupation was an attempt at blatant provocation. The whole world knows that the Great Jamahiriyah put forward a radical solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict which would achieve a just and durable peace and would make it possible for the Palestinians and Jews to coexist in one democratic and nonracist state. A similar solution was achieved in South Africa and that solution is the only one able to stop the bloodshed, eliminate violence, and install real peace in Palestine and in the Middle East region.

The communique added that the insistence of the three states on rejecting peaceful solutions to this dispute can only mean that they have been trading in the blood of the victims of the Pan-Am flight and the pains of their families for more than seven years for political and racial reasons, against the Libyan Arab people and their right to freely choose their own political system and way of life. They believe that continuation of the blockade will bring the Libyan people to their knees, abandoning their principles, aims, freedom, and independence, abandoning their rejection of American domination, and freely accepting the will of the leader of international terrorism. These Western state ignore the fact that this nation, which offered half of its number as a sacrifice on the altar of freedom at the time of the hateful Italian occupation, will not kneel to their will and will never barter its dignity and independence. It is prepared more than ever before to accept the challenge, irrespective of the sacrifices. It will always be at the vanguard of those who are struggling for right and justice and the ending of the domination of the major powers over the Security Council, for ending the misuse of the Security Council as a tool for realizing their aggressive policies against, rejection of the policy of double standards which can only lead to shaking the confidence of the small nations in the United Nations.

The communique concluded by saying that the Great Jamahiriyah believes it is time to openly confront these states, to tell them that the policy of humiliation will be of no use and that the real interests of the families of the victims on the one hand, and the Libyan people on the other hand requires that the UN Security Council should adopt a resolution stipulating acceptance of the Arab League's proposal and asking all parties concerned to quickly implement the proposal under the supervision of the Security Council. If these three states continue to reject this resolution then the Security Council should declare the lifting of the sanctions imposed on the Great Jamahiriyah because continuation of the sanctions would contravene the will of the majority of the international community.

Libya: Al-Qadhdhafi Seeks Funding Against Israeli 'Terrorism'

NC2303074196 Paris AFP in English
0417 GMT 23 Mar 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Dubai, March 23 (AFP) — Libyan leader Mu'ammar al-Qadhdhafi called on Arabs to fund Palestinian defence against Israeli "terrorism", in a rare interview shown on Dubai state television late Friday [22 March].

"I call on the Arabs to provide 100 million, even one billion, dollars to the Palestinians to enable them to combat Israeli terrorism, al-Qadhdhafi said from Tripoli.

He said this would be in response to the 100 million dollars pledged by the United States to Israel in the wake of deadly suicide attacks by Palestinian extremists and the recent Sharm al-Shaykh summit on terrorism.

The U.S. funds "in essence target the Palestinian people, whose houses and infrastructure Israel has been destroying," he said.

Libya angered western countries by praising the suicide attacks in Israel which have killed 60 people in the past month.

Al-Qadhdhafi also called for an Arab summit to be held as a matter of urgency in Cairo to discuss the future of the Arab nation and the results of the Sharm al-Shaykh conference.

"I call the Arab nation to revolution, I call for the formation of revolutionary committees, operating clandestinely or openly, to make the revolutionary [as received], and I call on Arab armies to rise up," he said.

Al-Qadhdhafi added that Arab countries should send their Palestinian residents back to the autonomous territories of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Those in Libya would return at the end of the current school year, he said.

Last September Libya began expelling Palestinians with the aim of showing that the Israeli-Palestinian autonomy agreements had failed. But a month later it suspended the operation under pressure from other Arab states and humanitarian organisations.

"Let the five million Palestinians living abroad return unarmed, bearing an olive branch, and let UN-supervised elections take place for a democratic state," al-Qadhdhafi said.

But the Libyan leader did not make his usual call for the destruction of Israel.

Libya: Islamic Fundamentalists Reportedly Kill 16 Soldiers

NC2403112296 Paris AFP in English
1110 GMT 24 Mar 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Al-Sallum, Egypt, March 24 (AFP) — Hundreds of Islamic fundamentalists who escaped from a jail in eastern Libya have killed 16 soldiers in clashes in the past four days, travellers arriving at the Egyptian border post of al-Sallum said Sunday [24 March].

They said the violence was continuing Sunday between security forces and the escaped prisoners from Benghazi jail, estimated to number around 400, in the eastern Libyan region of al-Darnah.

"Among the 16 soldiers killed were a colonel and a captain. The clashes took place in the mountainous region of al-Darnah," one traveller told AFP.

Morocco

Morocco: Local Council Officials Arrested for Embezzlement

LD2203150296 Rabat MAP in English
1345 GMT 22 Mar 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Rabat, Mar. 22 (MAP) — Many officials from local councils were brought before the special court of justice for embezzlement of funds following check up missions conducted by a finance inspection body in many Moroccan cities.

Investigations unveiled violations in the financial management of local councils, the inspection body said, adding that 87 former presidents, presidents and vice-presidents of local councils as well as 12 local agents were sanctioned for involvement in financial mis-management.

Morocco is currently waging a merciless campaign to struggle against drug trafficking, smuggling and fraud.

Moroccan state minister for the interior, Driss Basri, told Wednesday the government council that the campaign will shift in the next phase to tax evasion.

Morocco: Japan Grants Rabat $127 Million Loan

LD2203215896 Rabat RTM Television Network
in Arabic 2030 GMT 22 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] Morocco and Japan signed two agreements today in Rabat, on the basis of which Morocco will receive a loan for irrigation projects in the agricultural area of Abda-Doukkala. The occasion was an opportunity to stress the importance of economic cooperation between the two countries.

The agreements were signed for the Moroccan side by Mohamed Kabbak, the minister of finance and foreign investments, and for the Japanese side by Nashimura Motohiko, Japan's ambassador in Morocco, in the presence of a Japanese delegation representing six ministries. The agreement is for a loan granted by the Japanese Government to our country. The loan is valued at 1.2 trillion dirham [$127 million]. [passage omitted]

Sudan

Sudan: Airliner Reportedly Hijacked to Asmara

NC2403174896 Cairo MENA in Arabic
1720 GMT 24 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] Khartoum, 24 Mar (MENA)—A MENA correspondent in Khartoum has learned that a Sudanese Airways airliner was hijacked today while flying from Khartoum to Port

Sudan and that its route has been diverted to Asmara in Eritrea. The correspondent has learned that the airliner will then leave for Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, and that there are 40 passengers aboard. The correspondent also learned that the hijacker is Sudanese, but his demands are not yet known. The Sudanese authorities declined to disclose any information on the incident. It is not known yet whether or not the airliner has landed in Asmara. [passage omitted]

Sudan: Further on Hijacking of Sudanese Airliner

NC2403181996 London MBC Television in Arabic 1800 GMT 24 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] In an exclusive report to the MBC a short while ago, Eritrean security sources reported that opponents to the Sudanese Government have hijacked a Sudanese airliner while en route from Port Sudan to Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, and forced it to land in the Eritrean capital of Asmara.

According to unconfirmed reports, among the hijackers is a former officer in the Sudanese Army, whom the Sudanese Government is pursuing for leading a coup attempt that was recently foiled in Sudan. We will give you further details as available.

Sudan: Captain of Hijacked Plane Interviewed

NC2403192096 London MBC Television in Arabic 1818 GMT 24 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Pursuant to our first news report in this newscast, it seems that the hijacking of the Sudanese airliner to Asmara, Eritrea, is over. According to initial reports, opponents to the Sudanese Government hijacked the airliner while flying to Jeddah.

We have Bashir 'Ali, the captain of the hijacked airliner, on the line live from Asmara:

[Announcer] Captain Bashir, how did the hijacking occur, what happened?

[Captain] May God's peace and compassion be upon you. This is captain Bashir 'Ali, captain of Flight 214. The airliner was hijacked while on an ordinary flight from Khartoum to Port Sudan and Jeddah. The airliner took off on time, 0900 Zulu. About 20 minutes after takeoff, two hijackers proceeded to the cabin door, where head steward Riyadh was standing. They threatened us all to divert our flight to Asmara or they would blow up the airliner with all passengers aboard. We dealt with them quietly and properly under the circumstances. We heeded the hijackers' threats out of concern for the safety of the passengers and the airliner. We flew to Asmara. I believe that under the circumstance the permit to land in Asmara was given in a very reasonable time. We did not have to fly over Asmara airport for a long time. The hijackers' behavior seemed much disturbed and we tried to reassure them that out of concern for our lives and the passengers' we would obey them.

[Announcer] Were there any casualties, any incidents?

[Captain] There were no casualties. There were two hijackers and we landed at 1050. We were received well by the Asmara airport officials and the Eritrean authorities. We—the crew and the passengers—are now staying at the Niyal Hotel in Asmara. We are being treated very well. We managed to contact our relatives abroad. Generally speaking, everything is fine and there are no casualties. The passengers, crew, and the airliner are safe, praise be to God.

[Announcer] Captain Bashir, can you confirm the identity of the two hijackers?

[Captain] The two hijackers are Sudanese who resent the government. They speak in a tone that shows they are opponents. I believe they do not have deep political awareness to determine their own identity. They are opposed to the current regime in Khartoum.

[Announcer] Where are the hijackers now?

[Captain] They surrendered themselves to the authorities as soon as they arrived in Asmara. I think that they are with the Eritrean authorities. They were also treated well.

[Announcer] Captain Bashir 'Ali. We congratulate you on your safety. Thank you.

Sudan: Government's 24 Mar Statement on Hijacked Airliner

EA2503120296 Omdurman Republic of Sudan Radio Network in Arabic 1900 GMT 24 Mar 95

[Statement by Abd al-Basit Sabdarat, minister of culture and information, place not given — live]

[FBIS Translated Text] This morning, 24th March 1996, an Airbus number 320 belonging to Sudan Airways took off from Khartoum Airport on flight number 214 en route to Port Sudan and Jeddah. It had 42 passengers on board in addition to its seven-man crew.

On its way it lost contact with the airport's control tower until the (?Eritrean) authorities confirmed its landing at Asmara Airport at 1230. It was confirmed that all passengers and crew were unharmed.

The relevant authorities are continuing contacts with the Eritrean authorities (?to retrieve the plane) through legal and administrative channels.

Sudan: AFP—Al-Bashir Wins Reelection With 75 Percent of Votes

AB2203215596 Paris AFP in English 2136 GMT 22 Mar 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Khartoum, March 22 (AFP) — General Omar al-Bashir won Sudan's presidential election by 75 percent of the vote to stay in office, the elections commission announced on Friday [22 March].

Al-Bashir won 4,181,784 out of 5,625,280 votes, the commission's chairman Abdul Moneim al-Zein al-Nahas told a press conference. He said 8,110,650 voters were registered.

The incumbent president's nearest rival was Abdulmajid Kaijab with 133,000 votes.

Al-Bashir, who seized power in a military coup in June 1989, faced some 40 rivals, most of them unknowns, in the March 6-17 polls. A new parliament was also elected.

The parliament will hold its first session on April 1, after the elections in which Islamic fundamentalists strengthened their grip on power.

Sudan: Al-Bashir Wins Presidential Election

NC2203220596 Cairo MENA in English 2100 GMT 22 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Khartoum, 22 Mar (MENA) — Lieutenant General 'Umar Hasan al-Bashir has won the presidential elections that were conducted along with the general elections over the past couple of weeks. Al-Bashir will thus carry on as president for a term of five years.

He collected 4,181,784 votes which make about 75.7 percent of the total electorate that cast their votes.

Sudan: Official Announcement on al-Bashir's Election Win

EA2303151496 Omdurman Republic of Sudan Radio Network in Arabic 0430 GMT 23 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] [Announcer] Honorable listeners: Here is a repeat of the statement issued by the General Electoral Commission on the results of the presidential elections:

[Unidentified Official] [passage omitted] The winning candidate is staff Lieutenant General 'Umar Hasan Ahmad al-Bashir. He polled 4,181,784 votes — that is, 75.7 per cent. So, the final result for the presidency of the Republic: The winner is staff Lt. Gen. 'Umar Hasan Ahmad al-Bashir whose symbol is a fan. The percentage is 75.7. [applause] [passage omitted]

Sudan: Al-Bashir Says National Salvation Revolution To Continue

EA2303160196 Omdurman Republic of Sudan Radio Network in Arabic 1300 GMT 23 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] Before a huge gathering comprising tens of thousands of citizens who assembled this morning at the Martyrs Grounds in Khartoum to celebrate his election to the post of the president of the Republic for the next five years, the president-elect, Staff Lieutenant General 'Umar al-Bashir, said Sudan would continue along the same path of the National Salvation Revolution, guided by Islamic orientation and cultural tradition.

Staff Lt. Gen. al-Bashir said the revolution was a response to the Sudanese people's aspirations.

He went on to say that threats and the conspiracies being hatched against Sudan would never dissuade us from our determination to achieve our objectives. The banner, he added, raised high by the Sudanese people, would never fall, and the trials, however difficult, could only strengthen our determination and perseverance. His Excellency reiterated that the blood of our righteous martyrs would always be the driving force of our God-guided move forward.

Staff Lt. Gen. al-Bashir commended the civilized behaviour the Sudanese people had shown during the election process. This behaviour, he said, reflected the awareness of the masses. He said the remnants of the opposition had attempted to incite citizens toward boycotting elections, but the citizens gave them a hard slap in the face, by the enthusiastic and overwhelming turnout of 72.2 percent. This represented the highest percentage of voting since independence.

In this connection, Lt. Gen. al-Bashir reiterated there was no return to pluralism and sectarianism, because, he said, the Sudanese people had decided to move ahead along the path of [popular] consultative [democracy] through the political system.

Regarding the issue of national reconciliation, he said our vision of the matter was that this could only be achieved on the basis of national principles and the unity of the country. He called on all Sudanese people to close their ranks in order to achieve common goals. [passage omitted]

Sudan: Al-Turabi Says Government To Draft New Constitution

EA2303201596 Omdurman Republic of Sudan Radio Network in Arabic 1800 GMT 23 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] The secretary general of the Popular Arab and Islamic Conference and member of the elected National Assembly, Dr. Hasan Abdullah al-Turabi, has said that the newly elected National Assembly will draft a new permanent constitution for the country. He said this during a rally held yesterday evening in his constituency, Number Five, Khartoum South.

His excellency talked about the neutrality and fairness of the elections as confirmed, he said, by foreign observers who monitored the polls.

On the vote of confidence given to him by the electorate, he said he would carry out his responsibilities as would please God, reaffirming the adherence of the Sudanese people to God's law.

Sudan: Opposition Says 95 Percent of Voters Boycotted Elections

NC2403160496 Paris AFP in English 24 Mar 14 16 GMT 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Cairo, March 24 (AFP) — Sudan's opposition parties said Sunday [24 March] that 95 percent of Sudanese voters boycotted legislative and presidential elections earlier this month.

"It has been established that 95 percent of voters have boycotted the election," the National Democratic Alliance (NDA), a coalition of Sudanese northern opposition groups and southern guerrillas, said in a statement received here. According to figures announced Friday by the president of the Sudanese election commission, Abd-al-Mun'im al-Zayn al-Nahhas, 69 percent of registered voters, or 5.52 million people, went to the polls between March 6 and 17.

The Sudanese opposition had called for a boycott of the vote, which resulted in the election of President Umar al-Bashir, the previous leader, and brought an Islamic majority to parliament. The NDA also reaffirmed its rejection of gestures of reconciliation by the government.

The opposition group said it supported a UN resolution calling for sanctions against the Sudanese government if it did not turn over three Egyptian Islamic militants suspected in the assassination attempt against Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak in June in Addis Ababa. The NDA "believes international sanctions will prevent this unjust regime from using the resources of the country in its battle against the Sudanese people, deprived of medicine, schooling and other services."

Western Sahara

Western Sahara: Polisario Said Ready To Cooperate With UN, Morocco

LD2403154796 Algiers Radio Algiers Network in Arabic 1200 GMT 24 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] The Polisario Front renewed its total readiness to cooperate with the UN and OAU, stressing its wish to have direct negotiations with Morocco in order to overcome obstacles hindering a just and free referendum in Western Sahara. In a statement released today by the Saharan Information Ministry, the Polisario Front stressed it had proved a spirit of cooperation with the UN in order to contribute to the success of its missions: the liquidation of colonialism from Western Sahara. The statement added that the policy of stubbornness and obstruction carried out by the Moroccan Government prevented the UN from implementing the peace process in Western Sahara at a time when the Moroccan authorities were continuing their colonialist and repressive policy in the occupied cities of the Saharan Arab Democratic Republic.

Bahrain

Bahrain: Police Disperse Anti-Government Protests

NC2303110496 Paris AFP in English
1015 GMT 23 Mar 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Manama, March 23 (AFP) — Police broke up a demonstration of hundreds of youths who were shouting anti-government slogans in a Shiite suburb of Manama, witnesses said Saturday [23 March]. Police brandishing machine guns blocked the march late Friday [22 March] in the western suburb of al-Diraz and ordered the demonstrators to disperse but made no arrests, witnesses said. Another demonstration in al-Diraz on Thursday was broken up in a similar manner, people in the area said. Security forces were also heavily deployed Saturday in al-Diraz, where dozens of police vans were patrolling the streets.

Outlying villages, many now suburbs of the capital, have been the focus of protests against mainly Sunni Moslem authorities by the poorer majority Shiite Moslem population, calling for political reforms.

Bahrain has been struck by a wave of violence over the last 15 months that has killed 21 people. Political unrest erupted in December 1994 after the mainly Sunni Moslem authorities arrested a Shiite Moslem cleric, Shaykh 'Ali Salman, who demanded the restoration of parliament suspended in 1975.

Bahrain: Protests Held Overnight; Amir Remarks on Bangladeshi Victims

NC2503091696 Paris AFP in English
0656 GMT 25 Mar 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Manama, March 25 (AFP)— Armed policemen broke up anti-government protests in Shiite Muslim villages of Bahrain overnight, arresting or detaining a number of people, residents said Monday [25 March].

Protests broke out in al-Diraz and in villages around Sitrah, a suburb southeast of the capital where seven Bangladeshis were killed in a March 14 firebombing of a restaurant, residents said.

The amir, Shaykh 'Isa Bin-Salman al Khalifah, meanwhile told the Bangladeshi ambassador Akhter Ul Alam that Bahrain would impose "the toughest penalties" on those who murdered the Bangladeshis, the GULF DAILY NEWS reported. Seven suspects have been charged with the crime.

Around 80 people on Sunday night staged an anti-government protest in al-Diraz, a village west of Manama, where residents said demonstrations had been held almost nightly in the past few weeks.

"They were shouting slogans, demanding parliamentary democracy and the release of all those held in prisons," a resident said. "There was a minor scuffle with police, after which the demonstrators went away."

Few leave home after dark for fear they will "not return home safely," a resident said. "We switch off all the lights, watch television or read under a table lamp."

Children have not been attending the area's school because of protests there, one added.

Residents in the adjoining villages of Sanabis and Jidd Hafs, which are near al-Diraz, said a protest was staged at a secondary school in that area on Sunday.

An al-Diraz resident said up to 500 people have been arrested in Diraz and surrounding villages but this could not be confirmed with the authorities.

Another protest was staged at a mosque in the Sitrah area.

"They were stopped by police who were armed with machine guns. Some of them were taken away in a van. A few were seen here again later," according to a resident who asked not to be named.

Business is "down to a trickle" in the Sitrah area, 'Ali Ibrahim, a news vendor, said. "At least three retail outlets have closed down in the past three weeks."

Meanwhile, the Bangladeshi embassy said it would bury the three remaining Bangladeshis in Bahrain once it receives final approval from their families. The four others were buried here days after they were killed.

One al-Diraz resident was unmoved by their deaths. "We are fighting for a cause. Such things are bound to happen. We are prepared for the worst."

Protests erupted in December 1994 after the Sunni-led authorities arrested a Shiite Moslem cleric who demanded the restoration of parliament, which was suspended in 1975. Since then 21 people have been killed.

Bahrain: Foreign Minister Says Security 'Prevailing' in Country

JN2403101396 Manama WAKH in Arabic
0917 GMT 24 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Riyadh, 24 Mar (WAKH) — Bahraini Foreign Minister Shaykh Muhammad Bin-Mubarak Al Khalifah expressed his appreciation for the leaders of the Gulf Cooperation Council [GCC], who adopted an honorable position rejecting the recent subversive incidents in Bahrain.

In a statement to the Saudi newspaper AL-JAZIRAH published today, Shaykh Muhammad Bin-Mubarak Al Khalifah said that Bahrain, both its government and its people, is proud of this support. He highlighted the positions of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, led by King Fahd Bin-'Abd-al-'Aziz, custodian of the two holy mosques, the Saudi people, the GCC countries, and the Arab and friendly Islamic states.

The Bahraini minister asserted that security is prevailing in Bahrain. He pointed out that the devious group will not succeed in achieving its subversive goals. He added that the Bahraini Government deals wisely with these incidents, that the criminals will not escape the hand of justice, and that anybody who seeks to tamper with Bahrain' security will be firmly dealt with.

Regarding the GCC's meeting last week, the Bahraini minister said the this meeting was held in a fraternal atmosphere in which amity and love prevailed. He noted that the viewpoints of the conferees were identical and that the decisions made were constructive and useful and will bring good for the GCC's people.

Bahrain: Opposition Leader on Unrest, Jordan's Offer of Help

NC2403202796 Tehran Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Arabic 1730 GMT 24 Mar 96

[Telephone interview with Bahraini opposition leader Mansur al-Jamri in London by 'Isam Hasan in Tehran on 24 March; from the "News and Reports" program — recorded]

[FBIS Translated Text] [Hasan] Dr. Mansur al-Jamri, international news agencies have reported demonstrations and anti-government graffiti in Bahrain. What can you tell us about this?

[Al-Jamri] In the past few days, the Bahraini opposition at home and abroad called for commemorating the passage of two months since the arrest of Shaykh 'Abd-al-Amir al-Jamri and his companions. Although those people calmed down the country, served Bahrain, and worked as hard as they could to maintain security and stability and uphold the rights of the Bahraini people, the government betrayed its promises and arrested them, together with thousands of people. The number of detainees has so far exceeded 3,000.

Government forces raided villages and violated all sanctities. They attacked women and children, arrested women, and threatened to use tanks to wipe out villages. Now they are calling for setting up a police station in every school to attack and oppress students. They are burning schools and attacking students, as happened to nine-year old 'Ali 'Abd-al-Jabbar: they threw a bomb at him and then blamed the opposition for it. How can the opposition burn its sons? Why should the opposition throw a bomb at Samahij school, when Samahij has been an oppressed, persecuted village for 220 years? Why should one, out to defend these oppressed people, throw a bomb at them? All these methods are exposed, and the Bahraini people are so immune today that they can continue their civil resistance.

On the nights of Wednesday and Thursday, and on Saturday morning, people everywhere in the country responded to the opposition's call. On Wednesday, no one reported to school, and only 10-20 percent of university students attended university—only those who had exams; some exams were canceled. In Manama secondary school for girls, a sit-in and major protest were staged. The security forces sent one of their mercenaries, Khalil al-Sa'ati, to attack girls. They got their head covers removed, and about 60 students were dismissed from the school.

Nevertheless, the Bahraini people are daily escalating their peaceful civil resistance against this dictatorial policy. The world has highlighted this civilized conduct. For example, the British newspaper THE OBSERVER today points out the civilized practices of the Bahraini opposition and people and notes how the Bahraini rulers appear afraid, not knowing what to do, accusing a certain state and the opposition of practicing terrorism to justify bringing more foreigners to Bahrain to oppress the people. This will not succeed.

[Hasan] Dr. Mansur al-Jamri, Jordanian Prime Minister 'Abd-al-Karim al-Kabariti has said that Jordan is ready to help the Bahraini Government calm down the political and security situation there, as he put it. What is your comment on this?

[Al-Jamri] Jordan is looking for some role to play to return to the Gulf. Its relations with the Gulf states were restored after the intervention of the United States at the end of 1995. But Jordan, which had no way to enter the Gulf, finally found two ways to do so: First, to embrace the Iraqi opposition; second, to attack the Bahraini opposition. Jordan believes this will bring it closer to the Gulf states. Members of the Jordanian Parliament, therefore, were skeptical; they asked the government: Why this contradiction? Why are you attacking the Bahraini opposition while hosting the Iraqi opposition? Is the Iraqi opposition different from the Bahraini opposition? Is it because the Bahraini opposition is calling for a parliament and for freedoms, like in other countries?

Who said that there is terrorism in Bahrain calling for such an interference by Jordan? We believe that Jordan's search for a way to enter the Gulf is being done at the expense of the Bahraini people, just as the differences within the ruling family [in Bahrain] are being settled at the expense of the Bahraini people. We tell them that whatever they do, the people of Bahrain will not abandon their rights.

In the Arab League meeting in Cairo last week, Jordan called for the formation of an Arab deterrent force. That call failed. But even if it is realized, we can have nothing in Bahrain worse than what we have today—aggression against sanctities. No one in the world can do anything worse than this, except to start to destroy the people of Bahrain, as the government threatened to do. But if they think of this, they should consider what happened to the countries that did things like that. Take currency of those states, for example: While the dollar was once worth four [Iraqi] dinars, now one dollar is worth 3,000 dinars. Where is their economy, where is there status? We tell them: Do whatever you like, the people of Bahrain will not be eliminated.

[Hasan] Thank you Dr. al-Jamri for giving us this opportunity.

[Al-Jamri] Thank you.

Yemen

Yemen: Salih, Eritrea's Afworki Comment on Hanish Island Dispute

NC2403124096

[FBIS Summary] London MBC Television in Arabic at 1700 GMT on 23 March carries a 49-minute recorded special program called "The Islands' Dispute" that discusses the Yemeni-Eritrean conflict over the Hanish al-Kabir Island and smaller nearby islands in the southern Red Sea.

The program, hosted by Hasan Zaytuni, features comments by British and Arab academics and two members of the Yemeni and Eritrean delegations who present arguments and use maps to corroborate their respective views that the island in question and nearby smaller islands belong to their respective countries.

The program also features fragments of separate interviews with Yemeni President 'Ali 'Abdallah Salih, Eritrean President Isaias Afworki, Yemeni Foreign Minister 'Abd-al-Karim al-Iryani, Eritrean Interior Minister Ali Said Abdallah, Yemeni Deputy Prime Minister 'Abd-al-Wahhab al-Anisi, and others.

Asked by Zaytuni who started the crisis, Yemeni President Salih admits that Yemen sent some civilians to Hanish al-Kabir on a mission connected with investment and that it did so on the grounds that the island belongs to Yemen. Eritrean President Afwerki, speaking in Arabic, says: "Right from the start we demanded an independent investigation into this issue because Yemen made false claims and accused Eritrea of beginning the battles on these islands. Quite to the contrary, Yemen began preparations for its actions three weeks before the incident. Yemen carried out military maneuvers in al-Hudaydah, leaked statements to the media, and made preparations in the form of weapons, manpower, and officials. The details of these operations are on record. We have documents proving this, which we captured from the Yemeni positions after the battles ended."

Yemeni Foreign Minister 'Abd-al-Karim al-Iryani recounts how Yemen was astonished by Eritrea's sovereignty claim and its ultimatum to Yemen to evacuate the island. He says a flurry of diplomatic messages followed and meetings were held, first in Yemen and later in Eritrea, to defuse the crisis but to no avail.

Eritrean Interior Minister Abdallah, also speaking in Arabic, says that on 16 December 1995 Eritrean forces only reacted to Yemeni military provocations. The Yemeni president then is shown saying that the Eritrean military action came as a surprise and that apparently the Eritreans had prepared for it well in advance. Afworki repeats his claim that the Yemenis had long been making advanced preparations and that the Eritreans have documents to prove it. The Eritrean interior minister says that his country's military success in the operation resulted from the Eritrean troops' familiarity with the islands and adds: "We had no problem in deciding the outcome in a matter of hours. It is a good thing that not many people were killed."

Yemeni Deputy Prime Minister 'Abd-al-Wahhab al-Anisi then remarks: "Had we known beforehand that the Eritrean operation was being contemplated, it would have been very difficult for Eritrea to succeed."

Yemeni President Salih explains that the Yemeni troops on the island were ordered to surrender because of lack of ammunition. He notes that although the Yemeni Armed Forces could have subjected the island to artillery and aerial bombardment, they chose not to escalate the incident in order not to be drawn into a trap more serious than the island issue itself.

Yemeni Foreign Minister al-Iryani then denies the Eritreans have any claim to the islands, and Eritrean President Afworki says that Yemen has no rightful historical claim to Hanish al-Kabir and nearby islands. Al-Kabir adds: "These are Eritrea's islands. If any other party has a claim to them, the right method is to pursue arbitration and seek a peaceful solution."

Afworki is then shown complaining about claims that Israel was involved in the Eritrean seizure of the Island.

He says: "This appears to have become a fashion in the Arab world. Whenever there is a problem, Israel's name must be dragged into it."

Although Afworki acknowledges that Yemen, some of whose officials initially hinted about an Israeli role in Eritrea's actions, formally denied this later on, Yemeni Foreign Minister al-Iryani complains about Afworki's "wounding" remarks and says Afworki knows very well that the Yemeni Government never officially claimed that Israel was a party to the "aggression on the Hanish al-Kabir Island."

Al-Iryani adds: "We know, however, that he acquired six Israeli boats, and their sailors were trained in Israel. We knew about this before the aggression and we used to say that Eritrea has Israeli-built boats, but at any rate these have no connection with the dispute. He does not deny this fact; it was he who informed us of it." President Salih then denies that Yemen ever accused Israel or any other foreign party of involvement in the attack on the island.

Toward the end of the program, the host asks Presidents Salih and Afworki if they wish to give any special statement on the issue.

Salih calls on both nations to seek a peaceful solution and says they should concentrate on other pressing issues, including economic development.

Afworki says: "Regardless of the regrettable incident in the islands, I believe that my relationship with President 'Ali 'Abdallah Salih is a fraternal one. Relations between the Yemeni and Eritrean peoples are eternal and there can never be any reason to believe that this crisis will develop in such a way as to adversely affect these strategic relations. Being responsible to our people, we must play a constructive role in surmounting this ordeal and establishing eternal ties. As heads of state we must make contributions and take responsibility for any attempt to find a way out of this crisis."

In conclusion, Ethiopian President Meles Zenawi appears briefly on the program in his capacity as OAU chairman. Speaking in English, he tells MBC: "When this bloodshed took place, then of course it became more serious. Because it became more serious, we tried to help in the mediation."

Ethiopian Foreign Minister Seyoum, also speaking in English notes: "The two parties have agreed to establish an international arbitral tribunal; and at this stage both parties have given their consent that France play this role."

Yemen: Salih Interviewed on Dispute With Eritrea

JN2403141096 Sanaa Yemeni Republic Television Network in Arabic 1830 GMT 23 Mar 96

[Interview with Yemeni President 'Ali 'Abdallah Salih by unidentified correspondent from the London Middle East Broadcasting Corporation, MBC, "aired tonight" on MBC; place and date not given — recorded]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] [Correspondent] Your Excellency Lieutenant General 'Ali 'Abdallah Salih: First, I would like to thank you on behalf of the MBC for agreeing to this interview. The interview coincides with the emergence of the crisis between the brothers in Asmara and Sanaa over the islands in the southern Red Sea. Accusations have been made by each side about who started this crisis. Asmara insists that the Yemenis began to send civilians to the island [al-Hanish al-Kabir] on investment missions. They say that this violates what they term Eritrean sovereignty over the islands. What is Yemen's response?

[Salih] After a Yemeni-German agreement was reached, the Investments Authority agreed to send some civilians to the Yemeni island of al-Hanish al-Kabir on a mission connected with investment. We are certain, in light of all the documentation, that this island belongs to Yemen. We do not consider the mission to be aggression against or a violation of Eritrean sovereignty.

Following this civilian presence, contacts were made with the brothers in Eritrea and a committee was formed by both foreign ministers to discuss this situation. We said that we did not object to the talks and that each party could present its evidence and documents. Regrettably, we were surprised when the Eritrean brothers escalated the situation and carried out a military action. After their threats, a small military unit — 60 to 70 [Eritrean] personnel — was deployed.

However, an operation was planned, and they beefed up their forces there because they were planning to occupy the island. We did not think they would carry out a military operation, because relations were good and because nobody was against reaching an understanding. We support reaching a bilateral understanding through mediation, arbitration, or any other method. They surprised with their military action, and we endured this military action, the aggression, and the plundering.

[Correspondent] Before the military escalation, there were contacts between the two countries due to your good relations with President Isaias Afwerki. You spoke with him directly on the telephone. What did you talk about?

[Salih] The telephone call was after the war. However, we had spoken by telephone before the war and had agreed to form a committee made up of each country's foreign minister, interior minister, and minister of fishing resources. We agreed to form this committee, which then met in Sanaa and later in Asmara. However, the Eritreans already had a plan, as I learned afterward. At a meeting in Japan attended by the ministers of fishing resources from both countries, the Eritrean minister told our minister: We are going to strike at you on the island. Our minister said: We are brothers; why are you going to do this? The Eritrean minister said: No, we will attack you. The Yemeni minister said: We are brothers and neighbors; why are you going to do this? The Eritrean minister said: We will attack you. I was informed of this after the war.

Therefore, they had been planning this operation, which had external motives. There might have been an internal motive in Asmara. Any country that has domestic problems seeks to export them to the other side. This could have been one of the factors. It is still a young state, and we respect this neighborly country. Yemen is aware of its responsibilities before the international community, and it has never committed a stupid or arrogant act against its neighbors. We always seek to solve problems in a cordial manner. Their presence will not annul our right, and our presence will not annul their right, if they have a right.

People should first try to reach an understanding, but it seems there are motives and everything has a price. I do not think that this was motivated strictly out of jealousy because a company and a number of individuals were setting up an investment there. [passage omitted]

[Correspondent] Many observers praised the policy Yemen adopted to deal with this crisis; namely, to resort to wisdom and dialogue, instead of waging a war that will benefit no one. However, some people say that Yemen resorted to this policy in order to prepare for war. Is this true?

[Salih] If we are really preparing for war, we would not be giving Eritrea the opportunity to fortify its positions on the island. We would shell these forces with artillery and aircraft. We would also have prevented any supplies from reaching the island by sea or air. We resorted to a political solution because we believe this right will be regained sooner or later, particularly since we are shouldering our responsibilities before the international community. We will not err as they did. If everyone make mistakes, nobody will gain. We want to win the round through a mistake by the other party. We want to win the round peacefully. We are not ready to carry out any military operations, because we are confident this right will be restored in accordance with the documents we have. Golan will return to Syria tomorrow, after two weeks, after one month, or after a year because it is Arab territory. It will return. Sinai remained in the hands of the Israelis a long time. It returned to Egypt because it is Egyptian Arab land. The island will return to Yemen because we are confident it is a Yemeni island, particularly since there is a French mediation effort that has been encouraged by the United States. We will go to arbitration, and each side will present its documents.

[Correspondent] Your Excellency: Within the framework of the media campaign between Asmara and Sanaa, there have been accusations that a major external party is involved in this crisis, namely Israel. Yemen, however, did not confirm this officially and did not accuse Israel of playing a role in this crisis. These rumors appeared only in the Yemeni media. Do you believe that Israel has played a direct role in this crisis and encouraged the Eritreans to occupy the island?

[Salih] We have lengthy experience with the media. We did not escalate matters in the media, because we know that media escalation will escalate the situation on the ground. Wars start with words. We are aware of our responsibility in this regard and will not direct any insult toward the Eritreans. However, our accusation against the Eritreans is about its aggression against al-Hanish Island. We stopped at this point. We did not accuse the Eritrean regime of anything else.

Regarding foreign support for Eritrea, our strong relations with Eritrea make us doubt there is external support. Political observers can find out through regional, Arab, and international media reports who might have a role in escalating the situation in order to distract Yemen, particularly since Yemen emerged victorious after a 67-day war against the separatists. That was a unique war in the history of Arab wars. Some may be angry because Yemen championed its unity. They may have wanted to confuse Yemen. We do not want to hear the sound of guns. We want to hear something new, something about the economy, culture, science, and about methods to move from the 20th to the 21st Century. We have greater ambitions. Some parties may be angry, but their attempts will be destroyed on the Yemeni rock. All plots have failed over the last 34 years. Not a single plot succeeded. Those who plotted against Yemen and linked their fate with anti-Yemen forces failed. These inflicted some harm at one time or another, but not one of these plots succeeded in the last 34 years. [passage omitted]

[Correspondent] Mr. President: When the crisis between Sanaa and Asmara emerged, some Arab and African parties, particularly Ethiopia and Egypt, hastened to mediate between the two sides. Then came the French mediation. What is Yemen's stand on regional and international mediation?

[Salih] We welcomed and encouraged the Ethiopian and Egyptian mediations. Then came the French mediation. It is obvious that the brothers in Egypt and Ethiopia welcomed the French mediation. We learned that the French are in continuous contact with Egypt, Ethiopia, and the UN secretary general.

[Correspondent] It seems that the French mediation has failed in light of the stand announced by Asmara, represented by the need to define the nature of the problem. Yemen insists that the problem is over al-Hanish al-Kabir because the Eritrean Forces occupied it by force. Meanwhile, Eritrea believes that the problem is not over al-Hanish al-Kabir, but over Jabal Zuqar, al-Hanish al-Saghir, and al-Hanish al-Kabir, and maybe other islands in the future. Is Yemen ready to discuss the entire issue, rather than just al-Hanish al-Kabir?

[Salih] This matter will be explained to you in detail by the foreign minister and Marwan Nu'man [not further identified]. We accepted the principles presented by the French side and did not present any documents. Each party will present its claims when we go to arbitration. Nothing is preventing the Eritrean side from presenting its claims, even to the land. We will present our claims to any part of the islands that we believe belongs to us. This is not a problem. We did not present any working plan, but accepted what the French presented. This means we accepted this with conviction. The brothers in Eritrea say they want to define the disputed area. It is defined in the French paper. I think that [Foreign Minister] Dr. 'Abd-al-Karim and brother Marwan will explain this to you. I cannot recall the coordinates.

[Correspondent] There are more than 41 islands in the southern Red Sea. If the French mediation fails, is Yemen ready to make new concessions to render the negotiations a success, particularly since you have insisted from the beginning that the solution should be peaceful and that Yemen cannot be embroiled in a war?

[Salih] We will not make any more concessions than we already have. The only concession is that we will not carry out any military action. This is the biggest concession. There can be no concessions on the right to the islands and to sovereignty. The only concession Yemen can make is not to wage war and to seek a peaceful solution. We have great hope that the French mediation will not fail, particularly since it is supported by the UN secretary general and by the United States. We believe it will not fail.

[Correspondent] Let us go back to the interference by outside parties. The party that is widely mentioned is Israel. Do you believe there are other outside parties that are playing a role in this problem?

[Salih] We are not accusing Israel. However, we might say that they want us to accuse Israel so that they will benefit from Israel. This might be the objective. We do not accuse Israel, but we accuse Eritrea of occupying the island. There is no doubt that it has Israeli equipment and experts, but we will not accuse Israel.

[Correspondent] Whom do you accuse?

[Salih] We accuse Eritrea, which occupied the island.

[Correspondent] Do you accuse other outside parties?

[Salih] No, we do not.

[Correspondent] Some people speak about a Kuwaiti role in the crisis.

[Salih] We will not accuse anybody, we are accusing Eritrea. This has been said in the press and in articles. Some Kuwaiti papers might not have been successful in this matter. These papers made these accusations against themselves through their anti-Yemen articles and by supporting Eritrea. This was explained in political articles. We did not accuse Kuwait of anything. [passage omitted]

[Correspondent] Mr. President: If the French mediation and political solution fail, what will be the future of this conflict?

[Salih] I am certain that we will reach a peaceful solution. [passage omitted]

Yemen: Official Accuses Eritrea of Foot Dragging on Conflict

NC2303124296 Cairo Voice of the Arabs in Arabic 0610 GMT 23 Mar 96

[Telephone interview with Yemeni Deputy Prime Minister 'Abd-al-Wahhab al-Anisi in Sanaa by 'Adil 'Abd-al-Tawwab in Cairo; date not given; from the "Dialogue From Afar" program — recorded]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] ['Abd-al-Tawwab] We welcome you to this dialogue.

[Al-Anisi] Thank you very much.

['Abd-al-Tawwab] What is the status of the conflict over al-Hanish al-Kabir?

[Al-Anisi] Everyone has perhaps heard news agency reports about the French plan submitted to both Eritrea and Yemen. This is the latest proposal on the issue.

['Abd-al-Tawwab] Has Yemen determined its position on this French plan for an agreement on principles?

[Al-Anisi] Yemen has from the start made its position clear — namely, that it supports any efforts to settle the issue peacefully. The French mediation enjoys all parties' backing. It is based on consultation with all parties, notably Egypt, of course. As far as we are concerned, we do not have any basic objections to the plan.

['Abd-al-Tawwab] What about the other side's position on this plan? Has the French mediator been informed of Eritrea's position?

[Al-Anisi] The relevant Eritrean authorities issued a statement that they had received the plan and were studying it. They left themselves a loophole, however, by saying that they were thinking of making a bilateral initiative. We can only explain this by the fact that Eritrea is dragging its feet and evading any commitment to the French mediation effort and the agreement on principles.

['Abd-al-Tawwab] Concerning what you describe as Eritrea's dragging its feet on the French proposals, does Yemen have any new position or proposal?

[Al-Anisi] Eritrea says it is studying the proposal; we are waiting. Yemen also issued a statement declaring that the current good offices constitute the right path to arbitration. Endorsing the principles included in the French proposal does not close the door to any bilateral proposal, however. Yemen is not the party that is supposed to prove its good intentions. It is Eritrea that must prove its good intentions. If Eritrea makes a proper initiative, Yemen will be ready to deal with it in the right way and in a manner that will guarantee its rights, maintain regional security, and restore normal relations between the two sides. [passage omitted]

['Abd-al-Tawwab] Will Yemen remain committed to a peaceful solution even if the conflict drags on and on?

[Al-Anisi] We believe that prolonging the conflict does not serve the interest of any party — not Yemen, not Eritrea, not the region. In order to show an earnest desire for a solution, we believe it is necessary to avoid drawing out the issue.

['Abd-al-Tawwab] Thank you, Mr. al-Anisi.

[Al-Anisi] I also wish to thank the Voice of the Arabs and wish it success in serving the nation.

Yemen: Prime Minister on Economy, Reform, Dispute With Eritrea

JN2403205196 Sanaa Yemeni Republic Radio Network in Arabic 1700 GMT 24 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] Prime Minister 'Abd-al-'Aziz 'Abd-al-Ghani gave a news conference at the 30 November Hall in the economic and trade capital of Aden today. It was attended by Yahya Husayn al-'Arashi, minister of culture and tourism; 'Abdallah Ahmad Ghanim, minister of legal affairs and minister of House of Representatives affairs; and Taha Ahmad Ghanim, governor of Aden. The prime minister answered questions from representatives from the domestic and international media. [passage omitted]

Answering a question on the reform program, the coalition's position, and the existence of opposing views, 'Abd-al-'Aziz 'Abd-al-Ghani said that the government discussed and approved the second phase of the reform program. [passage omitted]

Asked about points of disagreement with the IMF and the World Bank and whether he expects the currency value to improve, the prime minister said: We disagree with the IMF and the World Bank on currency floating. We insist on fixing the value of the currency to reflect the country's true economic activity. We are also trying to raise the value of the local currency against foreign currency, and we will take the necessary monetary and financial measures to achieve that goal.

The prime minister said the country's financial policy continues to focus on protecting investment in various areas. He said that Yemen's economy is strong and enjoys improvement and development. The government and foreign capitals have great confidence in the national economy. [passage omitted]

Regarding recent developments in Eritrea's aggression against the Yemeni island of al-Hanish al-Kabir and on mediation efforts, including the French initiative, the prime minister said that our country has sought a peaceful solution to the problem of al-Hanish al-Kabir Island from the start and that it accepted all the initiatives offered by the brothers in Egypt and Ethiopia. He added: France then launched its initiative to solve the problem peacefully and also made proposals. If the two sides approve them, neutral arbitrators will be selected.

The prime minister also said: We fully support the French initiative, and we responded positively to the French proposals. If the other side accepts them, we will move to the second stage: selecting arbitrators to resolve the problem. He asserted that Yemen's policy, announced by the brother president on several occasions, is aimed at solving the problem peacefully.

During the news conference, the prime minister also discussed several local, regional, and international issues.

Yemen: Prime Minister Denies Knowledge of Coup Attempt

MM2503115596 London AL-SHARQ AL-AWSAT in Arabic 25 Mar 96 pp 1, 4

[Report by 'Abd-al-Salam Tahir: "Sanaa Denies Rumors of Attempted Coup"]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] Aden — Yemeni Prime Minister 'Abd-al-'Aziz 'Abd-al-Ghani has denied any knowledge of an attempted coup against the government in Sanaa a few days ago.

He said at a news conference in Aden yesterday that "we have not heard of anything of that kind except from you," addressing reporters. There were rumors among Yemenis a few days ago about a coup attempt that had been swiftly foiled. [passage omitted]

Yemen: Saudi-Yemeni Border Committee Issues Statement

LD2203200896 Riyadh SPA in Arabic 1700 GMT 22 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] Riyadh, 22 Mar — The following press statement was released by the Yemeni-Saudi joint committee in charge of demarcating the rest of the borders between the two countries. The Yemeni-Saudi joint committee, set up in accordance with Article 3 of the memorandum of understanding signed between the two countries on 26 February 1995 to determine the necessary measures to mark what was left of the borders between the two countries held meetings [in Sanaa] from 20 to 22 March 1996. The Yemeni delegation was chaired by his excellency 'Abd-al-Qadir Ba-Jammal, deputy prime minister and minister of planning and development of the Republic of Yemen, while the Saudi delegation was chaired by his excellency Ibrahim Bin al-'Anqari, the personal advisor to the custodian of the two holy mosques.

An atmosphere of brotherhood and a wish to reach what was sought by the leaderships of the two countries and the two brotherly peoples prevailed during theses sessions. The meetings of this round of talks will resume at a date which will be agreed upon by the two sides. [passage omitted]

Yemen: Government 'Welcomes' Libya's Call for Arab Summit

JN2403192496 Sanaa Yemeni Republic Television Network in Arabic 1800 GMT 24 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] A responsible source at the Foreign Ministry told the YEMENI NEWS AGENCY, SABA', that our country welcomes the call by Libyan leader Colonel Mu'ammar al-Qadhdhafi, leader of the 1 September Revolution, to convene an Arab summit in Cairo. The source asserted that the challenges that face the Arab nation cannot be countered unless total Arab solidarity is achieved.

Iraq: Voting Starts in National Assembly Elections

JN2403071496 Baghdad INA in Arabic 0610 GMT 24 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] Baghdad, 24 Mar (INA)—Iraqis headed to polling stations at 0800 this morning to elect 220 National Assembly members from the 689 candidates competing for seats.

This will be the Assembly's fourth term. Elections for the Assembly's first term were held in 1980, the second in 1984, and for the third term in 1989.

The state has provided all the requirements that will enable voters to cast their votes in complete freedom. It has assigned legal personnel to supervise the 1,464 polling stations located in 52 electoral constituencies throughout Iraq. [passage omitted]

The elections for the fourth term of the National Assembly reflect the revolution's eagerness to consecrate democratic traditions in Iraq. It is worth noting that several democratic practices were seen in Iraq last year, chief among which were the popular referendum on the post of president held on 15 October and the issuance of the Local People's Councils Law.

Iraq: RCC Guidelines on National Assembly Elections

JN2203211896 Baghdad AL-THAWRAH in Arabic 7 Mar 96 p 4

[RCC Guidelines No. 151 of 6 March 1996 on National Assembly Elections]

[FBIS Translated Text] In the name of God the merciful, the compassionate

Republic of Iraq
Revolution Command Council
Office of the Vice Chairman
Higher Commission Supervising Elections in Iraq
Guidelines No. 151 dated 6 March 1996

Guidelines issued by the Higher Commission Supervising Elections in Iraq to the committees supervising the conduct of elections in the constituencies and the election committees at polling stations.

The Higher Commission Supervising Elections in Iraq issued the following guidelines:

1. The election committee at the polling station shall assume direct supervision of the election process at the polling station.

2. Before the beginning of the election process, the chairman of the election committee at the polling station shall open the ballot box before the committee members and those present to confirm that it is of any paper. He shall then close it and show it to the voters to confirm that it conforms to the special guidelines on ballot boxes. All this shall be recorded in the special election report.

3. Each voter shall be given one ballot after confirming his identity. This will be confirmed by ticking his name in the electoral roll.

4. It is impermissible for a voter to cast more than one ballot in the ballot box.

5. Once election time is over, the chairman of the committee at the polling station shall announce that and enter it in the election report. He shall then open the ballot boxes one after the other in public.

6. The vote counting shall begin immediately after opening the ballot boxes under the supervision of the election committee.

7. The results of the vote counting shall be entered in the election report of the polling station.

8. The chairman of the election committee shall read out the report in public before the voters and then sign it with the other committee members.

9. The chairman of the election committee shall send the election report to the committee supervising the conduct of elections in the constituency with all the ballots and other documents in an envelope which will be sealed with red wax. The envelop shall carry the number of the polling station, the number of the constituency, and the name of the governorate.

10. The committee supervising elections in the constituency shall transfer the information contained in the election reports from the polling stations to its own election report. The chairman of the committee shall read out the election results in the constituency in public before those present and sign the election report with the other committee members.

11. The chairman of the committee supervising elections in the constituency shall send three copies of the committee's election report, plus a copy of the election report of each polling station within the constituency and a copy of the decisions made on election day by the constituency election committee and the committees at the polling stations, in accordance with the provisions of Articles 39, 40, and 42 as well as other pertinent articles of National Assembly Law No 26 of 1995, to the Higher Commission Supervising Elections in Iraq. As for the ballots and the other documents pertaining to the elections, they shall be kept with the quarter which is appointed by the governor, provided that they are kept in an envelop sealed with red wax for each polling station.

12. These guidelines shall be published in all the media.

[Signed] 'Izzat Ibrahim, vice chairman of the Revolution Command Council and chairman of the Higher Commission Supervising Elections in Iraq.

Iraq: National Assembly Election Committee Reports on Measures

JN2303175396 Baghdad Iraq Television Network in English 1700 GMT 23 Mar 96

[Announcer-read report]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Nearly 8 million Iraqi voters will head to polling stations tomorrow to elect 220 members of the National Assembly from among 689 candidates, including 30 women. The Supreme Committee Supervising the Elections in Iraq has taken all necessary measures to guarantee democratic atmosphere for the voters to cast their ballots freely and choose their candidates.

Among the measures taken by the Supreme Committee was the appointment of 1,516 supervisors from among judges, public attorneys, and judicial civil servants to monitor polling.

The Committee has also set up 1,464 polling centers in 52 constituencies and prepared lists of voters and ballot boxes to facilitate voting. The candidates from party members and independents have had equal opportunities for campaigning supported by the states. The leadership did not allow any party member, whether from among the candidates or otherwise, to have any special privileges in campaigning.

Iraq: 'Huge' Voter Turnout Reported

JN2403085396 Baghdad INA in Arabic 0755 GMT 24 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Baghdad, 24 Mar (INA)—There has been a huge turnout of voters in electoral constituencies in Baghdad and the governorates. Voters arrived at polling stations before 0800, the time set for the start of the election process, in which voters will elect their representatives to the fourth National Assembly.

IRAQI NEWS AGENCY correspondents deployed in electoral constituencies in Baghdad and the governorates reported that Iraqis arrived at polling stations dressed in their finest clothes as if they were celebrating a huge festival, which is the festival of democracy.

Twenty-two Arab and foreign media teams representing television networks, news agencies, newspapers, and magazines were deployed in electoral constituencies in Baghdad and the governorates to cover the fourth National Assembly elections, which began at 0800 today in Iraq.

Iraq: Vice President Ma'ruf Casts Vote, Comments on Elections

JN2403134196 Baghdad INA in Arabic 1310 GMT 24 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Baghdad, 24 Mar (INA)—Vice President Taha Muhyi-al-Din Ma'ruf said that the elections for the fourth National Assembly would strengthen the democratic march, whose foundations were laid by President Saddam Husayn.

In a statement to INA after casting his vote at polling station No. 12 in the Fourth Constituency, Ma'ruf said that this National Assembly will play a major role in the forthcoming march since it was elected at an important phase. He said our struggling [mujahid] people were able to confront the unfair embargo and continue their march toward a new phase, in which the candidates must rise to the level of responsibility and fulfill their duties, sincerely and faithfully.

Iraq: Election Committee Chairman Tours Polling Stations

JN2403152696 Baghdad INA in Arabic 1340 GMT 24 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Baghdad, 24 Mar (INA) — 'Izzat Ibrahim, Revolution Command Council [RCC] vice chairman and chairman of the Higher Committee Supervising the Elections, voiced his satisfaction with the progress of the voting process. He said people are casting their votes with great enthusiasm to elect their National Assembly representatives.

While inspecting some polling stations in Baghdad and Salah-al-Din Governorate, Ibrahim said this enthusiasm confirms that the Iraqi citizens are responsible and keen to fulfill their role in entrenching the democratic course.

Ibrahim inspected polling stations in the Fifth Constituency in the 28 April Complex. He cast his vote at 'Utbah Bin-Ghazwan polling station.

The RCC vice chairman and chairman of the Higher Committee Supervising Elections inspected polling stations in the 11th Constituency in al-Hurriyah City. Ibrahim also visited Polling Stations 1, 11, and 15 in the Second Constituency in al-Faris District, Salah-al-Din Governorate.

He also visited polling stations in the Second Constituency in Balad District, Salah al-Din Governorate;

Polling Station 10 in the Second Constituency in al-Ishaqi District; Polling Station 9 in the Second Constituency in Samarra' District, Salah-al-Din Governorate; and Polling Station 1 in the First Constituency in al-Dur District, Salah-al-Din Governorate.

Iraq: Arab, Foreign Press Delegations Tour Polling Centers

JN2403123196 Baghdad INA in Arabic
0913 GMT 24 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Baghdad, 24 Mar (INA) — Press delegations and representatives of Arab and foreign news agencies and televisions visited polling centers in Baghdad and the governorates today to follow the process of electing the people's representatives for the National Assembly's fourth term.

The delegations acquainted themselves with the democratic atmosphere in which the elections are being held, the proper organization, and the large turnout of people at polling centers to cast their ballots in one of Iraq's distinguished democratic practices, which will be added to Iraq's other democratic practices.

Director of the Press Center at the Ministry of Culture and Information told INA that more than 20 teams of journalists and correspondents, who are based in Baghdad or who came to cover the elections, were deployed at polling centers. He noted that among the press teams covering the elections are: the Swedish, Japanese, REUTER, American AP, and British television networks, as well as representatives of seven [as received] news agencies — the French, Spanish, Chinese, and Yugoslav news agencies, and REUTER and AP. Also covering the elections are representatives of Jordanian, German, Malaysian, and French newspapers and magazines in Baghdad and the governorates.

He added that the ministry provided these delegations with all that is needed to do their work. This includes guides, translators, work schedules, and meetings with officials in order to ensure the success of their mission.

Iraq: Dailies Laud 'Democracy' of Election Process

JN2403104396 Baghdad INA in Arabic
0710 GMT 24 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Baghdad, 24 Mar (INA)—The editorials of the Iraqi newspapers published here today address the democratic practice of electing 220 members of the fourth National Assembly. Six hundred eighty-nine candidates are contesting 220 seats.

The papers assert that voter turnout will be huge to epitomize the democratic traditions entrenched by President Saddam Husayn.

The newspaper AL-THAWRAH says: Voting, which is a democratic practice, is not only a right enshrined in the rules and regulations in force, but also a national duty to be performed by all citizens who are 18 years of age or older.

The paper adds: The current circumstances in which the enemies have maintained their embargo for the sixth consecutive year require the highest possible degree of awareness and duty. People have to perform their duties before thinking of their rights. This is because the enemies have continued to wager on the destabilization of the unity of the people; on the fragmentation of their steadfastness; and on disturbing the components of their stability, sovereignty, and independence. They believe that this is essential if their schemes are to be realized. Consequently, we are all required to confront these schemes with a large measure of militant awareness that must be translated into concrete terms today by going to the polling stations.

The paper stresses that the Iraqi people, who have a high sense of responsibility, will go to the polls to choose their representatives to the National Assembly. By so doing, they will be exercising a right and performing a national duty. They will prove to the enemies that Iraq has always been and will always remain very much alive, the paper maintains.

In an article published today, the newspaper AL-JUMHURIYAH says: The enhancement of democracy is a bright spot in a world darkened by the heinous American tyranny. The democracy we see with our own eyes today is for all to see. Democracy is synonymous with respect for the people's will. It entails a willingness to act on that will. As for the United States, it despises all peoples, tramples their freedom and free will, belittles their values and sovereignty, and starts fires to exterminate millions of people.

The paper adds: All signs and indications show that the United States does not want to see true democracy flourish and prosper anywhere, because this will promote the world peoples' free will and penchant for independence. This explains the U.S. abandonment of democracy, which it allegedly championed in the past to delude people, and its espousal of policies grounded in flagrant and brazen repression and terrorism here and there. The United States did so because it fully realizes that the world peoples' enjoyment of freedom will inevitably lead to a defeat of colonialist policies.

The paper goes on to say: The United States, more than any other colonialist country, is well aware that democracy cannot coexist with repression and loss of freedom. That is why it deliberately stokes and nurtures dictatorial tendencies through its official policies, which are grounded in the pronouncement that the United States has the right to unilaterally lead the world.

AL-JUMHURIYAH says: Really free peoples reject all kinds of custodianship and all dictates. That is why the United States uses economic embargoes, starts wars, and stokes crises to exhaust and blackmail them and make them accept U.S. hegemony or else face death and anguish.

The paper concludes by saying: The Iraqi people, thanks to their profound historical sense, are well aware of all this. Hence, they are determined to proceed with their democratic process, and to enhance and expand this process, because this process is the guarantee for creating the largest possible degree of freedom for the masses. Moreover, democracy is the means by which the masses can get involved in the decisionmaking process, take responsibility for the decisions they make, and follow up on their implementation. Given all this, we have the right to affirm that the elections today will produce a National Assembly that will promote the crossing to safe shores. The prime task of the new National Assembly is to contribute to preparing the people in terms of organization and mobilization for promoting their resistance to the pressures of the enemies of Iraq, to facilitate the crossing process and shorten the crossing period, and to ensure the involvement of all sectors of the population in this process.

For its part, the newspaper AL-QADISIYAH says: Millions of our people, who belong to the generation suffering from the embargo, will today head to the polls to choose their representatives to the assembly in this critical phase in the country's life, in which we are facing aggression and blockade.

The paper adds: The election of the National Assembly members today is an advanced qualitative step on the road to democracy. This practice is an unmistakable reflection of our people's determination to forge ahead along the path of breaking the unfair embargo. In this practice, our glorious people will renew their absolute allegiance to His Excellency President Saddam Husayn, whose historic leadership has continued to enjoy their love.

The paper notes the previous terms of the National Assembly, saying that the first term marked the growth, maturity, and entrenchment of the democratic process in the country. The second term, which came in the midst of the glorious Saddam's al-Qadisiyah battle, reflected the finest possible version of Ba'thist democracy in theory and practice, whereas the third term, which came after the achievement of our pan-Arab victory, marked the start of an advanced stage in democratic practice in Iraq.

The paper concludes by saying: The Iraqi people's masses will go to the polls today to elect their representatives to the fourth National Assembly with their hearts throbbing with love for leader Saddam Husayn. They will choose the most qualified to epitomize the leader's revolutionary course of struggle and fruitful and constructive work. This pioneering practice will produce a National Assembly that reflects the people's aspirations, one that is capable of making effective contributions toward consummating the democratic edifice built by His Excellency President Saddam Husayn.

Iraq: Arab League Delegate Commends National Assembly Elections

JN2403152196 Baghdad INA in English 1220 GMT 24 Mar 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Cairo, March 24, INA — Iraq's permanent representative to the Arab League Dr. Nabil Najm described the current National Assembly elections in Iraq as an outstanding move towards democracy.

In a statement to INA correspondent on Sunday [24 March], he confirmed that the democratic trend in Iraq is not a newly adopted one but rather a policy that had been followed by the 17-30th July revolution. He pointed out here to the solution the Iraqi leadership found for the Kurdish issue which was forming the executive and the legislative councils as well as the National Patriotic Progressive Front.

Mr. Najm added that the democratic practices Iraq has been carrying out got down all the allegations aired by the aggressors and aimed at misleading the world public opinion.

Iraq: Opposition Group Sees Elections as 'Farce'

MS2503102296 London THE TIMES in English 25 Mar 96 p 13

[Report by Christopher Walker: "Iraqi Poll of Vetted Candidates 'A Farce'"]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Opponents of Saddam Husayn of Iraq dismissed yesterday's parliamentary elections, the first held in his country since 1989, as a farce.

"It is impossible to hold a free and fair election in a climate of fear, oppression and censorship," said Ahmad Shalabi, chairman of the London-based group, the Iraqi National Congress. "In Iraq there is no freedom of speech, no political parties, no right of assembly, no free press and no independent judiciary."

All 689 candidates, including "independents" running for the 220 seats in the rubber-stamp National Assembly, had to be approved by a government screening committee, and all had to be declared supporters of the 1968 coup which brought the Iraqi dictator's wing of the Bath Party to power.

The poll has come as Iraq attempts to work out a deal with the United Nations to sell limited amounts of oil in order to buy food and medicine. Hopes in Baghdad that a campaign led by France and Russia to lift sanctions would succeed were set back by the President's ruthless disposal of his two defecting sons-in-law and UN revelations this month that 16 Scud missiles, some possibly equipped with chemical warheads, remain unaccounted for.

The Iraqi National Congress last night demanded "suffrage for all Iraqis". The group added: "This cannot take place until the instruments of terror are dismantled and Saddam himself is removed."

Iraq: Polls Close; Vote Counting To Start

JN2403180996 Baghdad Iraq Television Network in English 1700 GMT 24 Mar 96

[Announcer-read report]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Nearly 8 million voters went to polling stations today to cast their vote in the General Assembly elections. Six-hundred-eighty-nine candidates are competing for 220 seats of the Assembly. The candidates are competing in 52 constituencies, having a total of 1,464 polling stations.

Heavy turnout was reported since the early hours of this morning, and voting continued until a few minutes ago. Ballot counting is scheduled to start shortly, and results will be announced afterwards.

Several teams from international television networks, news agencies, and newspapers have visited polling centers to report on the elections.

Iraq: Information Minister on UN Talks, Domestic Issues

JN2203155796 Amman SHIHAN in Arabic 23-29 Mar 96 p 16

[Interview with 'Abd-al-Ghani 'Abd-al-Ghafur, Iraqi culture and information minister, by Faysal Malkawi in Amman; date not given]

[FBIS Translated Text] [Malkawi] Can you update us on Iraqi-UN talks on Resolution 986?

['Abd-al-Ghafur] We stress that the ongoing oil-for-food talks in accordance with Security Council Resolution 986 are not an alternative to Iraq's firm right to have the Security Council implement Paragraph 22 of Resolution 687. This resolution deals with Iraq's right to export oil in return for food, medicine, and other basic needs of the Iraqi people as a prelude to ending the unfair blockade imposed on Iraq.

The Iraqi-UN dialogue will continue. The first round concluded on 19 February. We reviewed the results of the talks and found that there are some positive points. We hope that the second round of talks, scheduled to begin on 11 March, will address the remaining points and that the dialogue will produce positive results. We stress that this must not replace Iraq's right to have the Security Council implement Paragraph 22 of Resolution 687.

[Malkawi] What about your relations with the Special Commission handling Iraq's weapons of mass destruction?

['Abd-al-Ghafur] Iraq implemented the Security Council resolutions on weapons programs, particularly Resolution 687 on weapons of mass destruction. Although the resolutions are unfair, Iraq decided to deal with them. It is now the Security Council's turn to fulfill its legal obligations toward Iraq, away from tendentious U.S. pressures. I must say here that whenever the Security Council is about to debate lifting the Iraq blockade, the United States fabricates a tendentious incident to harm Iraq and maintain the blockade. This happened during this month when the United States tried to provoke Iraq by prompting the Special Commission team to go into a government facility, which is the Ministry of Water and Irrigation. The outcome of these provocative attempts is that the United States has been exposed several times, without the commission finding anything about Iraq's weapons programs at these sites. Therefore, I say that Iraq fulfilled the Security Council resolutions and it is now our right to have the blockade immediately lifted by implementing Paragraph 22 of Resolution 687 as a prelude to ending the comprehensive blockade on Iraq.

[Malkawi] Do you expect the blockade to be lifted anytime soon?

['Abd-al-Ghafur] All Iraqi facilities and institutions are now ready for the likelihood of lifting the blockade shortly. All Iraqi institutions, especially oil facilities and airports, drew up plans and are now ready for the possibility of lifting the blockade. On the other hand, we are pursuing our development efforts on the assumption that the blockade will continue due to the suspect U.S.-Zionist plan to prolong it.

[Malkawi] Are there international parties that support Iraq's positions?

['Abd-al-Ghafur] France, Russia, and the PRC expressed positive attitudes toward lifting the Iraq blockade. However, the United States and Israel are still terrified by Iraq's development plans and view Iraq as a threat to their interests in the region. Therefore, they not only want the Security Council to demand that Iraq destroy its weapons and missiles, but also want it to devise a new formula to control Iraqi scientists in all fields. We in Iraq will continue to oppose and defeat U.S. pretexts and provocations that seek to prolong the Iraq blockade.

[Malkawi] Let us talk about the political situation in Iraq. When will the democratic process begin in Iraq?

['Abd-al-Ghafur] Let me first correct your question to read: How are you going to pursue the development process in Iraq? This process began in Iraq toward the end of the 60's. Iraq was the first Arab country to introduce party pluralism by allowing political parties to operate. The first elections of the National Assembly were held in 1980, only one year after Saddam Husayn assumed the party and state leadership. The second elections were held in 1984 under the Iranian aggression against Iraq. The 30-state aggression against Iraq and the foreign deployment in northern Iraq made the Iraqi leadership wait before holding the elections this time.

[Malkawi] Will the Revolution Command Council [RCC] be dissolved as part of political changes in Iraq?

['Abd-al-Ghafur] This will not happen because the RCC is the highest executive and legislative authority in Iraq. The RCC achieved great gains for the Iraqi people. The RCC does not cancel the role of the National Assembly. Rather, it activates its role in national and legislative action. For the Iraqis, the RCC represents a genuine revolutionary practice alongside the National Assembly.

[Malkawi] Will independent candidates be able to compete with candidates of the ruling Ba'th Party in the upcoming elections?

['Abd-al-Ghafur] For the first time, the Iraqi leadership decided that candidates of the ruling Arab Socialist Ba'th Party will not exceed 40 percent while 60 percent will be for independent candidates and others who represent intellectual, political, nationalist, Marxist, and other trends.

[Malkawi] How will the elections be held in the Kurdish area in northern Iraq?

['Abd-al-Ghafur] Given the extraordinary conditions in northern Iraq resulting from the foreign presence, the Iraqi leadership decided to address this question in accordance with Article 188 of the Iraqi National Assembly Law, which stipulates that "the president of the republic is authorized to issue a decision under which all or some of the members of the former National Assembly, who represent the area where elections were postponed until normal condition are restored, can maintain their seats in the new Assembly, if it is not possible to hold elections due to the extraordinary conditions."

Therefore, some members of the former Assembly representing al-Sulaymaniyah, Dahuk, and Irbil will be chosen as members in the new assembly. Possibly, some of northern Iraq residents will be chosen as new members in the new assembly until the foreign presence in northern Iraq ends and elections can be held there.

[Malkawi] Will the Iraqi parties be allowed to issue newspapers expressing their views?

['Abd-al-Ghafur] Yes, any licensed party will be entitled to issue a newspaper through which it will express its viewpoints. This is evident in the Iraqi Parties Law.

[Malkawi] What about the freedom of the press in Iraq? Can an Iraqi newspaper criticize the policies of the government or any official?

['Abd-al-Ghafur] Once addressing journalists and urging them to speak their mind frankly in their writings, President Saddam Husayn said: "Write without hesitation and do not care whether the government is pleased or not." Based on this, any newspaper or Iraqi journalist can write anything critical of the state agencies and officials. Indeed, this happened more than once and it is allowed to happen now. Press freedom has existed in Iraq since the 1970's, particularly after President Saddam's assumption of power in 1979. However, I address the Arab press and the UNESCO to expose the U.S. allegations on human rights in Iraq and to ask the United States to lift the embargo against Iraq and the Iraqi press, which is particularly suffering from the unfair embargo against Iraq and the Iraqi people.

[Malkawi] Will you conduct dialogue with the Iraqi opposition abroad?

['Abd-al-Ghafur] Our position on the Iraqi opposition abroad is clear. We believe they are traitors. We have not held any dialogue with them and we will not hold any dialogue with them in the future.

Iraq: BABIL Says UN Should Fire Ekeus for 'False Reports'

*NC2403114496 Paris AFP in English
1054 GMT 24 Mar 96*

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Baghdad, March 24 (AFP) — Iraq on Sunday [24 March] urged the United Nations to fire Rolf Ekeus as chairman of the UN Special

Commission [UNSCOM] on disarming Baghdad after accusing him of working with US intelligence.

BABIL newspaper, run by President Saddam Husayn's eldest son 'Udayy, accused Ekeus of "presenting false reports about Iraq" and scoffed at statements that Baghdad was hiding lethal missiles which could hit Arab neighbors and Israel.

The UNSCOM chairman has "traded his Swedish nationality for U.S. citizenship and agreed to work as an American policeman," BABIL charged. Ekeus enjoyed "full cooperation" with the U.S. secret services and "received instructions from State Department officials," it added. "Therefore Mr. Ekeus violates UN laws, and such civil servants should leave their job in line with international agreements." Ekeus, by accusing Iraq of hiding missiles, "is trying to win broader American support and hopes they will help him achieve his ambition (to be named) UN secretary general when Butros Butros-Ghali's term expires."

On Saturday another official Iraqi newspaper, AL-JUMHURIYAH, accused UNSCOM inspectors of causing "problems" on behalf of the United States to sabotage negotiations over an oil-for-food deal with the United Nations.

THE WASHINGTON POST said Thursday that Ekeus told a Senate committee that the long-range missiles were probably mounted on trucks and moved around the country to evade UNSCOM inspectors.

THE WASHINGTON POST also said Iraq's five attempts to block UN inspectors from entering government and army sites earlier this month were aimed at hiding information about the missiles which could carry chemical or biological agents.

Iraq: Paper on U.S. 'False Claims' About Iraqi Threat to Gulf

JN2503085196 Baghdad INA in Arabic
0800 GMT 25 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Baghdad, 25 Mar (INA) — AL-THAWRAH says U.S. officials are not ashamed of repeating cheap and exposed talk about Iraq, claiming that it is a threat to the region.

In an article here today, the newspaper, speaking for the Arab Socialist Ba'th Party, says: Although the economic embargo against Iraq has not yet been lifted and the inspection teams are continuing their job of fabricating pretexts and excuses, General Bin, commander of U.S. forces in the Gulf [presumably General Binford Peay III, chief of the U.S. Central Command] posed as a soothsayer when he predicted that Iraq would resume its armament policy once the sanctions are lifted.

The newspaper adds: As part of its global strategy, the United States seeks to control the region's oil and political and military affairs. However, U.S. strategic plans collided with a major obstacle — Iraq.

The newspaper goes on: The United States insists on maintaining the Iraq blockade and on isolating Iraq politically through so-called dual containment and raising fears of Arab countries about Iraq's alleged threat. This is especially the case since the United States observed that most of these countries want to mend fences with Iraq.

AL-THAWRAH points out that Arab reconciliation refutes all U.S. false claims about so-called Iraqi "threat" to the region. The United States is seeking, in vain, to terrorize Arab states by a threat named Iraq to consolidate its military presence and tighten its grip on the region's oil and resources.

The newspaper concludes: There is a growing U.S. sense of concern about the future. This prompts U.S. officials to repeat, without much thinking or shame, their cheap and exposed lie about an alleged Iraqi threat to the region.

Iraq: Egypt Air Delegation Arrives To Settle Financial Issues

NC2403143696 Cairo MENA in English
1409 GMT 24 Mar 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Baghdad, 24 Mar (MENA)—A delegation of Egypt Air arrived here to settle some financial issues for the Egyptian liner office in Baghdad. The visit is the first since the world embargo of August 1990 of air flights to and from Baghdad.

Iraq: Jordan, Kurds Confirm Former Chief of Staff's Defection

MM2203164096 London AL-SHARQ AL-AWSAT
in Arabic 22 Mar 96 p 4

[Report by 'Adnan Husayn in London and 'Imad al-Furayh in Amman: "Washington Knew About Former Iraqi Chief of Staff's Defection to Jordan"]

[FBIS Translated Text] Jordan yesterday officially confirmed the defection of Nizar al-Khazraji, former Iraqi chief of staff, with Jordanian Information Minister Marwan al-Mu'ashshir saying that al-Khazraji was "on his way to Jordan". Iraqi opposition sources in London confirm that the former chief of staff has been in Amman since last Tuesday, having arrived there via Turkey from the Kurdish areas in northern Iraq, and that the United States knew early about al-Khazraji's departure from Iraq.

News agencies have quoted the Jordanian minister as confirming reports published yesterday about the Iraqi official's defection to Jordan and saying: "Yes, this officer has asked to come to Jordan. We have granted his request, and he is on his way here." He did not give additional information, but London-based Iraqi opposition sources have confirmed to AL-SHARQ AL-AWSAT that he arrived on Tuesday in Amman from Turkey, which he entered via the Kurdish area under the control of the Kurdistan Democratic Party [KDP], led by Mas'ud Barzani.

The sources believe that Jordan "may not have wanted to announce al-Khazraji's defection at present and had been taken by surprise by the news of his flight from Iraq and defection to Jordan."

While KDP sources have refused to either confirm or deny that the party assisted al-Khazraji in his flight through the Kurdish areas, independent Iraqi Kurdish sources have told AL-SHARQ AL-AWSAT that the former Iraqi chief of staff had made prior contacts with the party, which ensured his safe passage to the areas it controls and from there on to Turkey, whence he left for Jordan. Other sources have confirmed that the United States was aware of the fact that al-Kharzaji had entered the Kurdish areas, and that some leaders in Barzani's party had informed the U.S. "Military Coordination Office" based in the area and in charge of arrangements for protecting the Kurdish safe area since 1991.

The opposition Iraqi National Congress was the first to reveal al-Khazraji's defection to Jordan when the IRAQI BROADCASTING CORPORATION affiliated to it broadcast a report the day before yesterday. REUTER yesterday quoted diplomats in the Jordanian capital saying that, despite the fact that the former Iraqi chief of staff has had no influence for many years, "his defection is an embarrassment to (Iraqi President) Saddam Husayn."

Iraq: Opposition Claims Regime's Forces Repelled in South

LD2303152096 Kuwait KUNA in Arabic 1142 GMT 23 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Tehran [dateline as received], 23 Mar — An Iraqi opposition organization today said that its forces repelled a wide-ranging attack carried out by the Iraqi regime's armored forces on areas controlled by the opposition forces in southern Iraq, inflicted losses on them, and forced them to withdraw.

"The mujahidin [as received] of the Islamic revolution in Iraq" [quotation marks as received] said in a statement, a copy of which has been received by the KUWAITI NEWS AGENCY, that the regime's forces launched a sudden attack yesterday, Friday, at dawn on two axes aimed at sparse areas in the north and northeast of the town of Al Basra and on other sectors in the areas controlled by the Iraqi opposition.

The statement said that 25 armored vehicles took part in the attack, which was launched in the areas of Al Mizlag and Abu Salabikh in the first axis; and from 'Ayn Rumayh to al-Shib in the second. The opposition forces laid ambushes, some of which hit the enemy and inflicted on them great human and material losses.

The statement also stressed that the regime's forces used scorched-earth tactics before retreating from the battle field at 1400 on the same day.

The statement concluded by saying that the opposition forces were put on a full state of alert in the areas facing the 6th Armored Battalion of the Iraqi Armed Forces.

Iraq: Regime Artillery Reportedly Pounds Kurdish Villages

NC2403162896 (Clandestine) Voice of the People of Kurdistan in Arabic 1500 GMT 24 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] The Iraqi regime artillery located in the (Bani Maqan) area pounded the villages of Jafan, Guran, and (Jabali) in the Karkuk Governorate as the Kurdish people were celebrating the Nayruz feast. The bombardment caused heavy damage to several homes and the death of cattle.

Israel: Peres on Lebanon Situation, Hebron Withdrawal

TA2203192196 Jerusalem Israel Television Channel 1 Network in Hebrew 1700 GMT 22 Mar 96

[Interview with Israeli Prime Minister Shim'on Peres by moderator Yisra'el Segal in Peres' bureau on 22 March — recorded]

[FBIS Translated Text] [Segal] There is no news from the north at this point, which is good, but the tension continues. Syria sent a message to Israel via the Americans in which it undertook to henceforth restrain Hizballah forces in the security zone. Prime Minister Shim'on Peres conferred today with the chief of staff, the Air Force chief, Uri Lubrani, and several other defense establishment officials to discuss Israel's preparedness for any eventuality in Lebanon. The impression we got in an interview we conducted with the prime minister this afternoon is that at this point Israel will not launch a military operation in response to the recent attacks in which an IDF [Israel Defense Forces] officer was killed. Here is the interview:

[Begin recording] [Segal] Mr. Prime Minister, Shalom and good evening to you.

[Peres] A good and blessed evening.

[Segal] Sir, in the present circumstances, is the only option left to Israel in Lebanon a military one?

[Peres] It depends on Hizballah's actions. We have a problem with a guerrilla movement. Guerrilla warfare does not have a frontline and is not a one-time conflict, but is always a continuous and complicated battle. Military attacks must be retaliated against militarily.

[Segal] From the Israeli Government's point of view, has Hizballah broken the understandings with its latest actions?

[Peres] Not in the formal sense of the word, but it expanded and distorted them and treated them according to its own interpretation. In fact, our main problem is not only with Hizballah but also with the Lebanese Government. It is totally inconceivable that one country should have two armies and two governments, one disobeying the other — one government holding the loudspeaker, and the other holding the trigger. The situation in Lebanon today is that Hizballah holds the trigger, while the Lebanese Government holds the loudspeaker.

[Segal] Not only that, but it fully supports Hizballah. The Lebanese prime minister officially announced his enthusiastic support for Hizballah yesterday.

[Peres] He supports Hizballah, but the question is whether Hizballah is subordinate to the Lebanese Government.

[Segal] And what do you think?

[Peres] I think that Hizballah is not. It does not give a damn about the Lebanese Government. In my opinion, Hizballah today gets most of its support from Iran. Hizballah leader Nasrallah said: As for our brothers in Iran, we made contact with them, and they expressed willingness to help us. We do not conceal the fact that we receive financial and political aid from Iran. He forgot to mention military aid in the form of weapons, training, and orders.

[Segal] How?

[Peres] In Lebanon there actually is a military and political body that reports to Iran and is not subordinate to the Lebanese Government. Israel is asking the Lebanese Government whether it exists at all, is relevant at all, or bears any responsibility. As for Iran, we know it is a government of murder and terror. We know the Iranians use every possible means, including diplomatic mail, to smuggle weapons and explosives. We know that Iran exerts pressure to hit targets in Israel and Jewish and Israeli targets overseas. They put up an act and deny this, and there are still Europeans who want to conduct what they call a critical dialogue with them. There is no room for it.

[Segal] Sir, is there any significance to the fact that you mention only the Lebanese Government but not the Syrian Government? After all, there are contacts with the Syrians to have them exert pressure on Hizballah.

[Peres] The formal aspect is not negligible. The Lebanese Government claims to be responsible for Lebanon, and that is why we address our questions to it. We know that even though the question is addressed to the Lebanese Government the answer is not written only by the Lebanese Government.

[Segal] But by the Syrian Government, too?

[Peres] By other forces and governments, too.

[Segal] It has been reported in the press — but I would like to hear it from the primary source — that the Americans have been holding talks with the Syrians and mediating between us and the Syrians with regard to Hizballah's activities. Is that true?

[Peres] Yes. Naturally, the Americans want to prevent an escalation, and so do we. After what happened, three terrorist attacks in one day, the Syrians said these had probably been planned before. We said that we could not have any consideration for words or promises but only for what happens in the field itself. I should say that I must act with the utmost consideration. I cannot act either on the basis of impressions or in order to make an impression; neither one nor the other.

[Segal] As far as you know, are the Syrians taking any measures to curb Hizballah?

[Peres] I will only judge by what happens in the field. I have no other way to make a judgment. In other words, after we received the U.S. message — as I said before, there were three attacks, including the suicide operation — we were led to understand that these had apparently been planned before. We will see what happens.

[Segal] On another issue, sir. According to the agreement, next Wednesday, on 28 March, we were supposed to pull out of Hebron. Will we or won't we?

[Peres] We were not supposed to pull out but to redeploy.

[Segal] Will we redeploy?

[Peres] I thought we needed a week in order to redeploy, but now I learned that a few hours are enough. I will decide at the last minute. However, in order to redeploy in Hebron — and we have learned that there is a considerable Hamas [Islamic Resistance Movement] presence in Hebron — I want to be sure that the Palestinian Authority [PA] is in control of Hamas and I also want to know where we stand with regard to the Palestinian Charter. We will make the decisions the moment it is necessary.

[Segal] What do you mean when you say that the PA must be in full control of Hamas? How can it prove it to you, say, in Hebron? By arresting activists?

[Peres] By the extent of its activities against Hamas leaders in Judaea, Samaria, and the Gaza Strip. I cannot demand from the PA 100 percent success. We never had 100 percent success either. Our yardstick is whether there is a 100 percent effort to put an end to these activities. I must say that in the past week or two they have been making a very serious effort to track down Hamas leaders both in Gaza and in Judaea and Samaria. I want to be convinced that this is a continuing effort.

[Segal] Knesset Member Beni Begin has been declaring from every possible forum — he is prepared to put his political career on the line and said he would quit if this turns out not to be true — that there is a document concerning an understanding between Hamas and the PLO about the former's modus operandi, whether or not to operate against Israel, and where. What is your reaction to it?

[Peres] First of all, what is a document?

[Segal] A piece of paper.

[Peres] Is a piece of paper or a newspaper a document? It is not; it is just a piece of paper. As for whether such an agreement exists, I do not know about the existence of such an agreement. There has been a plethora of declarations on both sides of the fence on all possible issues. I do not know that an agreement, such as the one mentioned by Beni Begin, has been signed.

[Segal] Begin says that intelligence officer Ya'aqov 'Amidror is the man who actually told the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee about the agreement, and that you prevented him from going to Washington because of it.

[Peres] First of all, an Intelligence Branch officer has never appeared before the U.S. Congress in Washington. I do not understand why an Intelligence Branch officer should appear in Washington seeing that we have an embassy there. If the U.S. Administration or Congress wants to hear the official opinion of the Israeli Government it should be presented by our embassy. They cannot invite people from here and there, however important their goal may be. There are no personal views when it comes to government policy.

[Segal] Sir, allow me to ask you at least one question about internal politics. We are only a few days away from the primaries. You are not taking part, but you are watching the boys at play, to use a Biblical reference. Does the rivalry between Ehud Baraq and Hayim Ramon remind you of something?

[Peres] First of all, it reminds me that men are human. Let us not pretend; every man has his tendencies and instincts. They are not boys, but two adult and very talented men....

[Segal, interrupting] Who needed your intervention to make up.

[Peres] In the end they settled it between themselves. I am very proud of Labor's leading team. It is an excellent team....

[Segal, interrupting] I must watch out seeing that I do not want to be accused of engaging in election propaganda. I would like to read to you a Likud advertisement: Shim'on Peres dreams about a new Middle East where Syria fights Hizballah and 'Arafat exterminates Hamas. Peace is not built on fantasy.

[Peres] Where is the fantasy here? If they are talking about the Palestinians, when did Palestinians ever fight terror? When in the past 100 years? What sort of a fantasy is that? When did 13 Arab countries come to Sharm al-Shaykh — at a time when Israel imposed a closure on the territories, placed people under administrative detention, demolished houses — without saying a word about it but instead agreeing to cooperate in the war against Hamas?

What are these gentlemen talking about? What didn't they try in Lebanon? First of all, if we are talking about fantasies, I seem to recall that the Likud once celebrated peace with Lebanon. They said peace would reign in the land for 40 years. There was a war in Lebanon, there was an invasion in Lebanon, and what was achieved? We know that there is a guerrilla war in Lebanon. This takes time, it requires patience, and it sometimes gets on one's nerves, but we are fighting it. Everything is being done after the utmost consideration, and slowly the Middle East is changing. What do they propose, that we go back to Gaza, that we go back to the casbah in Nabulus? What are they talking about? What do they propose, to settle another 500,000 Jews in Judaea and Samaria in order to ignite a new intifadah and create a chaos that we won't know how to get out of? Do they propose that we change our priorities, that we cut back on education, development, and research? What sort of a plan is that?

Listen, balloons [allusion to festivities at Likud Central Committee session earlier this week] are one thing, and reality is another. Reality is gradually changing.

[Segal] Mr. Prime Minister, thank you very much. [end recording]

Israel: Beilin on Conditions for Lebanon Withdrawal

TA2203175896 Jerusalem Israel Television Channel 1 Network in Arabic 1600 GMT 22 Mar 96

[Interview with Israeli Minister Yosi Beilin by political correspondent Shlomo Ganor in the studio on 22 March — recorded, in Hebrew with Arabic subtitles; translated from the Hebrew]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] [Ganor] Dr. Beilin, to what extent is the United States involved in the efforts to allay the tension on the northern border?

[Beilin] The Americans are interested in peace between Israel and Syria and in preventing an eruption of violence in the region, and that is why they are involved in the attempt to allay the tension in the north. We want them to have an interest, and we hope that it will be possible to prevent some kind of deterioration into unnecessary violence.

[Ganor] What is the purpose of the U.S. efforts? Is it to attain new understandings with Syria and Hizballah?

[Beilin] We want to make sure that Syria will indeed prevent Hizballah from operating against Israel. We know that Syria has the means to prevent Hizballah's activities, even if it does not necessarily know all that Hizballah does in the field at a given time. I hope the U.S. activity will achieve this. Of course, we do not rule out the possibility that if this effort fails we will have to act, not necessarily in a diplomatic manner.

[Ganor] The impression given by the Israeli restraint is that Israel's hands are tied. Is that so?

[Beilin] Israel's hands are not tied. The IDF [Israel Defense Forces] is not the weakest army in the Middle East, and Hizballah is not the factor most threatening to peace in the region, seeing that we are talking about a few hundred militia fighters. We do not want to use our vast might as the first option. It is because of our strength that we are able to restrain ourselves, unless we see that there is no other way. Therefore, our hands are definitely not tied. We are the ones tying our own hands, as long as we do not reach the conclusion that there is no option other than the military one.

[Ganor] Does the security zone provide security to Israel?

[Beilin] The security zone was set in 1985 in order to safeguard the security of the Galilee settlements. The moment we become convinced that our northern settlements do not face any danger from militias, such as Hizballah, we will have no reason to stay there. We are not interested in even one centimeter of Lebanon's soil. We are there only because we are not convinced — and very rightly so — that if we get out there will be peace there.

[Ganor] Under which circumstances could Israel get out of the security zone?

[Beilin] If understandings and agreements are reached with all the pertinent elements — such as the Syrians, and through them with the various militia groups and with the Lebanese Government, which is not in full control — which will convince us that indeed there is no danger to the northern settlements from southern Lebanon, I definitely see a possibility of an Israeli pullout from that area. Of course, if this is achieved through a peace agreement with Syria and Lebanon, this will be the best.

[Ganor] I would like to understand what you are saying, Dr. Beilin. Are you proposing an Israeli withdrawal or pullout from the security zone in a way that is independent of a peace agreement with Lebanon?

[Beilin] Our primary choice is that this should be done within the framework of peace with Syria and Lebanon.

However, if a situation emerges where even without such an agreement Israel becomes convinced for one reason or another — and this will not be that simple — that no danger is being posed to the north, we will definitely consider a pullout from south Lebanon.

[Ganor] To what extent is this idea supported by the Israeli Government today?

[Beilin] This has been the Israeli Government's avowed policy through the years. We are not in south Lebanon for political reasons, but we are there only for security reasons. The moment the security threat is removed we will not have to be there.

[Ganor] How much does the tension on the northern border affect the resumption of the negotiations with Syria?

[Beilin] It is very hard to hold negotiations with another party when we know that it provides shelter to terror. I must say that in recent years I have become less optimistic about the Syrian track. I believe that the Syrians missed an opportunity to reach peace during this government's tenure. They could have done it, although not on their terms. They found here a partner that was prepared to go a long way, and it is a shame that they did not do it. At the same time, if it is possible to resume the negotiations prior to the elections, I think that this is preferable. We will certainly be able to do it after the elections. [passage omitted]

Israel: U.S. Said Urging Morocco's Hassan To Visit Israel

TA2503112896 Jerusalem THE JERUSALEM POST in English 25 Mar 96 p 1

[Report by David Makovsky]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] The U.S. has pledged to urge Morocco's King Hassan II to visit here shortly, Deputy Foreign Minister Eli Dayan said yesterday. He denied such a visit aims to bolster Labor's electoral prospects.

"(Assistant Secretary of State for Near East Affairs Robert) Pelletreau said he would try his best to bring King Hassan here. We have not heard yet, but hope to get an answer in the next few days," Dayan said, adding he met with Pelletreau during President Bill Clinton's visit two weeks ago.

Dayan denied a Hassan visit would be aimed at bolstering Labor with floating voters, even though he was reported to have said a few days ago such a visit should be held before the elections. It is believed Yitzhaq Rabin attracted many voters of Moroccan origin in 1992.

"A visit by Hassan transcends politics," Dayan insisted. "Rather, it would be a sign of normalization with the Arabs, which is needed to save the peace process. We have to combine a fight against terrorism with greater normalization. I also told Pelletreau that leaders or government ministers from any Arab country should visit, not just Hassan. I told him (Egyptian President Husni) Mubarak should also visit, as should his ministers."

Israel: Qatar Reportedly Not To Open Representation in Israel

TA2303115696 Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in Hebrew 0800 GMT 23 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] 'Abdallah (Mutawa), the Qatari representative to the Palestinian Authority, said that despite the pressures being applied on his government, it will not open a representation in Israel, but Qatar might open a business office in Tel Aviv. Our correspondent Yoni Ben-Menahem said that the Qatari representative made the remarks after conferring with Gaza Mayor 'Awn al-Shawwa last night.

Israel: Curfew Imposed on West Bank Village Following Firebomb Attack

TA2303115196 Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in Hebrew 1000 GMT 23 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] The IDF [Israel Defense Forces] this morning imposed a curfew on the village of 'Isawiyah in the Tulkarm region. Our correspondent Yoni Ben-Menahem reports that the curfew was imposed because a firebomb was hurled at two Israeli vehicles last night.

Israel: Hamas Activists Arrested; Palestinians Allowed Back in Erez

TA2503053596 Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in Hebrew 0500 GMT 25 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] As part of its activities against Hamas [Islamic Resistance Movement], early this morning the IDF [Israel Defense Forces] arrested five men suspected of engaging in hostile terrorist activities. Our correspondent Yoni Ben-Menahem reports that they were arrested in Janin, Tulkarm, Bethlehem, and Hebron.

Defense establishment sources say that the shipment of food to the Gaza Strip through the Qarni crossing will be improved in the coming days, and that efforts will be made to deliver large quantities of raw materials to provide work and reduce unemployment. A senior source said that there is a constant stream of warnings about plans to stage terrorist attacks in Israel, and noted that the closure helps disrupt these plans. The senior source estimated that the closure would not be lifted before the Israeli elections.

The defense establishment has permitted most of the Palestinians employed in factories in the Erez area to return to their jobs. The High Court of Justice will hold a hearing on the decision to bar one worker, Khalil Isma'il, from entering Israel. Our correspondent Mikha'el Tuchfeld reports that the man is the brother of a senior Hamas activist, and that is why he is not being issued an entry permit. The affidavit responding to the appeal states, among other things, that it is relatively easy to enter Israel from Erez.

Israel: Peres on Rabin Assassination, Talks With Syria, Iran

TA2503102796 Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in Hebrew 0800 GMT 25 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] There are still small groups in Israel who believe that political assassination is a solution, and the government must thwart their designs, Prime Minister Shim'on Peres stated today. According to him, the differences in the public prior to Rabin's assassination resurfaced recently and only youths are still under the strong impression left by it. Mr. Peres was addressing the 1996 International Press Institute World Congress in Jerusalem.

Referring to the peace process with Syria, Peres said that it will resume after the elections if he wins them, but that no territory whatsoever will be ceded before Israel makes absolutely sure that we are talking about real peace.

The prime minister once again pointed out that the main problem in our region is Iran and its efforts to attain nuclear weapons. Our correspondent Ron Nesi'el adds that Mr. Peres believes that a broad international coalition should be established against Iran and that the ties that several European countries maintain with Tehran, which they define as a critical dialogue, should stop.

Israel: Yatom Named New Mosad Head; Peres on Easing of Closure

TA2403092696 Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in Hebrew 0900 GMT 24 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] In today's cabinet session, Prime Minister Shim'on Peres announced Major General Dani Yatom's appointment as the new Mosad head. Our political correspondent Shlomo Raz reports that the ministers congratulated Yatom and welcomed the appointment. Also in the session, Mr. Peres said there are many warnings about attempted attacks and only if the terrorist heads are caught and the number of warnings decreases will it be possible to consider significant easing measures in the closure. He said that the government will discuss this issue in one of its upcoming sessions.

Minister Yosi Sarid said that Palestinians with serious illnesses are not receiving medical treatment because of the closure, adding that it is inconceivable to impose a closure without dealing with humanitarian issues. He also warned that the rate of unemployment among the Palestinians — which has reached some 70 percent because of the closure — creates a situation that only Hamas [Islamic Resistance Movement] will enjoy.

Israel: U.S. Expected To Recognize Israeli Nuclear Ability in Pact

TA2403103296 Tel Aviv HA'ARETZ in Hebrew 24 Mar 96 p A1

[Report by Aluf Ben]

[FBIS Translated Text] Israel and the United States will not sign a defense pact or a strategic memorandum of understanding before the elections, and will probably settle for a joint statement that will be published when Prime Minister Shim'on Peres visits Washington next month. The statement will say that the two countries will conduct discussions on expanding their defense-strategic ties.

Defense Ministry Director General David 'Ivri and political coordinator Uri Savir will go to the United States next month to formulate the joint statement and prepare Peres' visit. The issue will later feature in talks Foreign Minister Ehud Baraq will hold with U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher in mid-April.

Israel wants the joint statement to express as much as possible the American commitment to Israel's security and to upholding the IDF's [Israel Defense Forces] technological edge. Israel decided to "lower the profile" on the defense pact with the United States in view of the chilly U.S. response to the offer to upgrade the strategic ties before peace with Syria is attained. While in Israel, U.S. President Bill Clinton told Peres that "the idea should be thoroughly examined."

Senior political sources believe that the chances of signing a significant defense pact before a peace contract is signed with Syria are very slim. According to them, the United States will be willing to give Israel a significant security compensation only in return for waiving territorial-strategic assets on the Golan Heights.

In inner discussions held here since Clinton's visit, it has been agreed that at the present time, Israel can sign an agreement that is devoid of content — one which will only anchor the current state of affairs — in a document resembling the strategic memorandum of understanding from 1988. The attempt to advance toward signing a defense pact started after Savir held a meeting with U.S. peace talks coordinator Dennis Ross near the end of the last round of talks with the Syrians at Wye Plantation.

In the conversation, Ross said that the Israeli-U.S. negotiations should move ahead even if the talks with the Syrians are frozen. Following that conversation, various Israeli elements believed that a defense pact could be addressed separately from the agreement with Syria, and that upgrading the strategic ties with the United States could be expedited. Peres instructed the Defense Ministry to present him with an offer for a defense pact with the United States. The offer, prepared before Clinton's visit, says: The United States will recognize Israel's need to maintain a strategic deterrence ability "in the foreseeable future." Israel is, thus, trying to anchor in a written agreement the U.S. recognition of the existence of an independent nuclear ability in Israel, even in peacetime.

The Defense Ministry prepared an initial draft of the main points of what will be called "A Pact for Strategic Cooperation and Mutual Security." One part of the agreement will be public, and will mainly include general statements. The other part will be secret, and will also include the commitment to maintain Israel's nuclear capability.

The overt part of the agreement will say that the United States is committed to Israel's security and to bolster its ability "to defend itself on its own." The accord will put in writing the agreement on providing Israel with ongoing military assistance, and emergency aid in case Israel comes under a grave threat.

Israel is willing to allow the United States use of its territory and facilities for the activation of U.S. Army forces in the Middle East. The secret part of the agreement includes: a proposition that the value of the ongoing military aid be maintained and the scope of special aid expanded; expanding intelligence cooperation; financing the Israeli defensive antimissile systems, including the purchase of Arrow missiles; and, in addition, granting Israel a qualitative compensation in case an agreement with Syria is signed.

Israel: Sources Deny AL-BILAD Report on Hamas Deportations

TA2403115096 Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in Hebrew 1100 24 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] The newspaper AL-BILAD, which is published in the territories, writes that over the past few days Israeli and Jordanian representatives have discussed the possibility that Israel deport Hamas [Islamic Resistance Movement] and Islamic Jihad activists, who hold Jordanian passports, to Jordan. In reaction, security sources have said there is no intention of deporting Hamas and Islamic Jihad activists to Jordan, but rather to Lebanon.

Israel: No Chances of Left-Wing Bloc Prior to Elections

TA2303114396 Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in Hebrew 0800 GMT 23 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] The chances of setting up a bloc of small left-wing parties prior to the upcoming elections have evaporated. Our correspondent Pe'erli Shahar reports that HADASH [Democratic Front for Peace and Equality], the Arab Democratic Party, the Democratic National Alliance, and Ahmad al-Tibi's Arab Movement for Change are divided in their stands on the Oslo accords. The four will highlight in their campaigns the demand to set up a Palestinian state. HADASH will also appeal to voters disappointed with David Levi for having rejoined Likud.

Israel: Government Using U.S. Loan Guarantees for Private Sector

TA2503110296 Tel Aviv HA'ARETZ in Hebrew 25 Mar 96 p C2

[FBIS Translated Text] The government is subsidizing private sector loans with the U.S. loan guarantees. This transpires from an annual report issued by the Bank of Israel's Foreign Currency Department yesterday.

The average nominal return on the government bank deposits earmarked for loans to the business sector and taken from the U.S. loan guarantees was 7.0 percent. It should be noted that the credit cost paid by the government on the loan guarantees is 7.7 percent. The report notes that the cost differentials stem mainly from the time lapse between the date on which the government raised the loans and the date on which the funds were transferred to the private sector.

The report indicates that by the end of 1995 $1.7 billion were transferred to private companies, 86 percent of which went to one company.

Israel: Closure Again Partially Eased; PA Said Violating Agreement

TA2403043596 Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in Hebrew 0400 GMT 24 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] There are additional easing measures in the closure; Palestinian workers who have received work permits from the Civil Administration will be permitted to work in the Jewish settlements in Judaea, Samaria, and the Jordan Valley as of today. The ban on the entry of workers from the territories into Israel is still in force. Israel protested to the Palestinian Authority [PA] over the fact that its security services are acting contrary to the agreement in Area B, the rural area in Judaea and Samaria. Brigadier General Herzl Getz, head of the security committee, said the Palestinians are carrying out sham arrests in this area, instead of directing their efforts at fighting terrorism. He noted that the Palestinians have so far not detained the terrorist leaders, adding that Israel should insist they act with greater determination and not release the terrorists who have been detained. Brig. Gen. Getz denied the Palestinians' claim that in Bethlehem they have apprehended a squad of collaborators handled by the Israeli Shin Bet with the purpose of carrying out attacks.

Israel: Peres Approves Continued Medical Treatment for Palestinians

TA2403131496 Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in Hebrew 1200 GMT 24 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Prime Minister Shim'on Peres said he has approved the continuation of medical treatment for residents of the territories inside Israel despite the closure. The soldiers at the various crossings have received orders to inspect ambulances bringing Palestinians for hospitalization in Israel.

This, among other reasons, because a recent inspection revealed explosives underneath a pregnant woman on her way to hospitalization inside Israel.

Jordan: Iraqi Diplomat Reportedly Deported

NC2403220896 Cairo MENA in Arabic 2020 GMT 24 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Amman, 24 Mar (MENA)—Jordanian sources have announced that the Jordanian Foreign Ministry asked an Iraqi diplomat at the Iraqi Embassy in Amman to leave Jordan.

The sources said this evening that Jordan decided to expel Husayn Faraj, assistant to the information counselor at the Iraqi Embassy in Amman, for his engagement in activities incompatible with his diplomatic status. The Iraqi diplomat left Amman for his country.

[Paris AFP in English at 0816 GMT on 25 March adds: Jordan has expelled an Iraqi diplomat giving him 48 hours to leave the country after accusing him of violating the terms of his diplomatic status, official sources said Monday [25 March].

[Husayn Faraj Khalaf, assistant press attache at the Iraqi embassy in Amman, was accused of "conducting activities not in line with his diplomatic status" and "last week given 48 hours to leave the kingdom," one source told AFP.

[An Iraqi diplomat confirmed the Khalaf's departure but he could not say when the incident had happened.

[Relations between former allies Jordan and Iraq have soured since the August defection to Amman of two sons-in-law of Iraqi President Saddam Husayn.

[Former industry minister General Husayn Kamil Hasan, and his brother Colonel Saddam Kamil Hasan were shot dead in February days after returning to Iraq from their exile in Jordan.]

Jordan: Expelled Diplomat Said To Have Been Monitoring Iraqis

MM2503113496 London AL-SHARQ AL-AWSAT in Arabic 25 Mar 96 pp 1, 4

[Unattributed report: "Jordan Expels Iraqi Diplomat"]

[FBIS Translated Text] Amman, AL-SHARQ AL-AWSAT — The Jordanian authorities have revealed the expulsion of an Iraqi diplomat, who was given 48 hours to leave Jordanian territory.

Khalid Madadihah, Jordanian minister of state for foreign affairs, confirmed to AL-SHARQ AL-AWSAT in Amman over the telephone that Iraqi diplomat Husayn Faraj was expelled from Jordan on the grounds that he is persona non grata since he conducted activities incompatible with diplomatic traditions in Jordan.

Madadihah added that Jordanian security officers watched Husayn Faraj and discovered that he was conducting activities incompatible with his diplomatic duties in Jordan, so he was given 48 hours to leave the country.

A diplomatic information source at the Iraqi Embassy in Amman has confirmed that Husayn Faraj left Amman for Baghdad two days ago. The source told AL-SHARQ AL-AWSAT over the telephone from the press counselor's office at the Iraqi Embassy in Amman that Faraj left Amman for Baghdad following his transfer, saying that his transfer is a normal practice. The source did not acknowledge the diplomat's expulsion by the Jordanian authorities.

Husayn Faraj was an assistant to the Iraqi press counselor. However, an Iraqi opposition source in Amman has said that Husayn Faraj was one of the Iraqi intelligence officers working at the Iraqi Embassy in Amman.

The opposition source stressed that Husayn Faraj was implicated in monitoring the movements of Iraqi intellectuals and others in Amman.

According to the Iraqi opposition source, the Jordanian authorities have in the past expelled Iraqi diplomat Jasim al-Khalidi, who ostensibly occupied the post of Iraqi assistant trade attache, but he too was an Iraqi intelligence officer.

Jordan: 'Tit-For-Tat' Embassy Expulsions Between Amman, Baghdad Noted

NC2503151096 Paris AFP in English 1351 GMT 25 Mar 96

[By Saad Hattar]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Amman, March 25 (AFP) — Jordan has expelled an Iraqi diplomat for the first time, provoking Baghdad to throw out a member of the Jordanian embassy in a tit-for-tat response, Jordanian officials said Monday [25 March].

Information Minister Marwan al Mu'ashshir said Amman decided to expel the assistant press attache at the Iraqi embassy because of his involvement in "activities incompatible with his diplomatic status," the phrase normally used for spying.

Husayn Faraj Khalaf was given 48 hours to leave the country on Thursday, officials said. An Iraqi diplomat said he returned to Baghdad on Friday.

It was the first such expulsion of an Iraqi diplomat by Jordan, which was formerly seen as an ally of Iraq and a supporter of its August 1990 invasion of Kuwait.

The Iraqi press attache in Amman, Adel Ibrahim, told AFP: "We were notified about Khalaf's expulsion on Thursday without being given a reason."

Iraq retaliated by ordering an administrative assistant at Jordan's embassy in Baghdad out of the country, al-Muashshir told reporters.

He said Ra'd Hammuri, who does not enjoy diplomatic status, had not yet arrived in Amman. The overland journey from Baghdad to Amman — the only way out of sanctions-hit Iraq — takes 12 hours.

Al-Muashshir said Iraq had "the right to take reprisal measures."

Jordan has three diplomats in Iraq including ambassador Bassam Qaqish in addition to administrative personnel. Iraq has some 20 diplomats in Jordan, down from 32 in recent years.

Jordan's move came 18 days after it said it had intercepted spare parts for military jets bound for Iraq in violation of UN disarmament sanctions imposed on Baghdad after the 1991 Gulf War to free Kuwait.

It was not clear whether the expulsion was directly linked to Jordan's reported discovery, the fourth of its kind in five months.

Relations between Jordan and Iraq have deteriorated sharply since the August defection to Amman of two sons-in-law of Iraqi President Saddam Husayn.

Former industry minister General Husayn Kamil Hasan and his brother Colonel Saddam Kamil Hasan were shot dead in February days after returning to Iraq from Jordan, in a move King Husayn condemned as "disgusting."

The king had personally granted the defectors asylum and repeatedly called for a change of government in Iraq, saying the brothers had "opened his eyes" to the situation there.

He also met privately with Iraqi opposition groups abroad, as his government said it was willing to host an opposition conference to discuss Iraq's future.

And in an unprecedented move February, the opposition Iraqi National Accord said it was opening its headquarters in Amman from where it intended to work against Saddam's leadership.

Jordan also announced in early March that it would serve as a base for the first time for US combat planes patrolling a no-fly zone over southern Iraq, imposed by the United States, France and Britain in August 1992.

Iraq's response to Jordanian criticisms has so far been muted and the two neighbours are still linked by strong economic ties.

Jordan depends entirely on Iraq for its oil supplies, importing 70,000 barrels per day under an exemption to UN sanctions.

Trade between Iraq and Jordan, its only outlet to the rest of the world because of the UN embargo, stands at 200 million dollars a year.

News of the expulsions came a day after millions of Iraqis went to the polls in the first parliamentary elections since 1989, denounced by exiled opposition parties as a sham to boost Saddam's image at home and abroad.

Initial results Monday indicated a victory for Saddam's Ba'th party.

Jordan: Al-Kabariti on al-Khazraji Arrival, 'Terrorist' Acts

JN2403100396 Amman AL-RA'Y in Arabic 24 Mar 96 p 21

[FBIS Translated Text] Amman — AL-RA'Y — Prime Minister 'Abd-al-Karim al-Kabariti announced that Lieutenant General Nizar al-Khazraji, former Iraqi chief of staff, arrived in Amman last Thursday [21 March]. Interviewed by London MBC Television, the prime minister said that Nizar al-Khazraji, who is a prominent Iraqi military personality, is an Arab citizen who arrived in Jordan as an Arab citizen and was given a one-month residence permit by the security departments. Regarding his future program and the length of his stay in Jordan, or in another place, this matter concerns him, the prime minister said. Al-Kabaraiti added that when he submits any request we will then discuss it.

Asked about what he announced before the Foreign Affairs Committee at the House of Representatives regarding the foiling of 36 terrorist operations and whether foreign regimes were involved in these operations, al-Kabariti said: The operations I mentioned at that meeting are documented at the security departments. Praise be to God, we are reassured about the ability and readiness of the Jordanian security departments to abort any scheme aimed at encroaching on Jordanian security and stability. If any international quarter asks for details of these operations, we will give them details which will not jeopardize the investigations of our security organs.

Jordan: Iraqi National Accord Welcomes General's 'Defection'

JN2403135696 Amman JORDAN TIMES in English 24 Mar 96 pp 1, 7

[Report by JORDAN TIMES staff reporter P.V. Vivekanand]

[FBIS Transcribed Excerpt] Amman—A former chief-of-staff of the Iraqi army has arrived in Amman after defecting from the regime of Saddam Husayn and the government has granted him permission to stay in the Kingdom, official sources confirmed Saturday.

Lieutenant-General Nizar al-Khazraji "landed in Amman late Thursday aboard a flight from Turkey," one source said. "He has been granted permission to stay in Jordan as a regular resident," added the source, who did not want to be identified. Several other sources confirmed the account.

The confirmation ended three days of uncertainty over the whereabouts of the general, who, according to Iraqi dissident sources, had fled Iraq through the northern Kurdish region which is beyond the control of the Baghdad government.

Gen. al-Khazraji was met upon arrival in Amman by members of the Iraqi National Accord movement, an exile group opposed to the Saddam regime, and was whisked away to a residential area of the capital, the sources said.

The Iraqi National Accord movement on Saturday welcomed "The decision of Gen. al-Khazraji to join the ranks of Iraqi opposition in confronting the regime of Saddam Husayn and initiating changes in Iraq to save our people and our armed forces from oppression, dictatorship and sanctions."

A spokesman for the movement, in a statement sent to the JORDAN TIMES, said Gen. al-Khazraji's defection "confirmed the isolation of the Baghdad regime..."

The movement called on "all Iraqi people and soldiers to strengthen the struggle and to mobilise all efforts and energies against Saddam Husayn and his corrupt cliche to achieve democracy, freedom, pluralism and security in Iraq."

Gen. al-Khazraji's defection and "the results" of his decision to join the opposition were a "clear signal that Saddam Husayn and his weak regime are on their way to elimination and that the national struggle for change is very near.

"The Iraqi masses and armed forces are now with the opposition and its goals to save the country from dictatorship and terrorism," the one-page statement added.

The White House said meanwhile the defection of Gen. al-Khazraji pointed to the unrelenting brutality of President Saddam.

Spokeswoman Mary Ellen Glynn said in Ohio, where President Bill Clinton was speaking at a university, that the U.S. Administration was aware of the report that Gen. al-Khazraji had defected in Jordan.

"It highlights the brutal activities of Saddam Husayn's repressive regime," she said.

"It now seems that Gen. al-Khazraji is close to the Iraqi National Accord," said one source. "He could now be expected to state a public position against the Iraqi regime and explain his reasons for defection."

Official Jordanian sources said the defector had not presented any request to hold a press conference, but Iraqi sources said they expected the man to address the media "as soon as possible."

The Iraqi National Accord is a relatively new organisation that set up a presence in Jordan early this year, following the killing of defector Husayn Kamil, a son-in-law of President Saddam Husayn. [passage omitted]

Jordanian officials have been careful to point out that the government has only given Gen. al-Khazraji "permission to stay in the Kingdom" but not "political asylum."

Gen. al-Khazraji's choice of Jordan as a potential refuge was seen to reflect a rejection of Syrian moves to put together an anti-Saddam coalition. Damascus planning to host a meeting of Iraqi dissidents, but, according to Iraqi exiles, the gathering may not draw any significant level of attendance from representatives of the various groups opposed to the Baghdad regime. [passage omitted]

Jordan: Former Iraqi Chief of Staff's Whereabouts 'Unclear'

JN2303094296 Amman JORDAN TIMES in English 23 Mar 96 pp 1, 7

[Report by JORDAN TIMES staff reporter P.V. Vivekanand]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Amman—The whereabouts of a former chief of staff of the Iraqi army who was reported to have defected to Jordan remained unclear on Friday, one day after the Jordanian government said it had accepted a request from the man to come to the Kingdom.

Jordanian sources said Lieutenant-General Nizar al-Khazraji had already arrived in the Kingdom but declined to be specific. Some Iraqi opposition sources said they did not have any information on his whereabouts while others said the man was in Jordan.

Another Iraqi defector living in Amman welcomed the defection and said he was looking forward to working with Gen. al-Khazraji, the second senior Iraqi military officer to defect in one year. Gen Wafiq al-Samara'i, head of military intelligence, defected last year and now lives in Syria.

The Iraqi National Congress (INC), an umbrella group for Iraqi dissidents, claimed in London late Wednesday that Gen al-Khazraji, a Shi'ite Muslim described as a hero in the 1980-88 Iran-Iraq war, was in Jordan after defecting through the north of the country.

The significance of the defection was seen more symbolic than substantial following the dramatic defection in August of two sons-in-law of President Saddam Husayn who were killed upon their return home after they were granted a pardon in February.

Information Minister Marwan al-Mu'ashshir, asked whether Jordan had granted Gen. al-Khazraji political asylum, said: "We have granted him permission to come to Jordan, but it does not mean that we have given him political asylum."

Dr. al-Mu'ashshir said he was not aware whether the defector had arrived in Jordan. Jordanian and Iraqi sources gave conflicting accounts. Some said Gen. al-Khazraji arrived here late Thursday night and was "taking a rest" before appearing in public at a press conference in the next few days. Others said he was due to land here late Friday aboard a flight from Turkey.

Gen al-Khazraji led Iraq's Seventh Army Division in the last three years of the 1980-88 Iran-Iraq war and served as chief of staff of the Iraqi army during the war over Kuwait in 1991, according to the INC.

The INC said Gen. al-Khazraji was wounded and captured by Iraqi rebels in the south who staged an uprising following the war over Kuwait, but was released later.

Apparently he was not active in the Iraqi army structure since then.

"He may have important military information to provide, but beyond that it is difficult to see how he could be an important figure in the opposition against the regime of Saddam Husayn," commented an Iraq watcher in Amman.

The defector's choice of Jordan as a potential refuge was seen to reflect a rejection of Syrian moves to put together an anti-Saddam coalition. Damascus is hosting a meeting of Iraqi dissidents this week, but, according to Iraqi exiles, the gathering may not draw any significant level of attendance from representative of the various groups opposed to the Baghdad regime.

The general's defection follows the debacle of Husayn Kamil and his brother Saddam Kamil, both sons-in-law of President Saddam, who fled their homeland along with their wives in August. They returned home in February after the Iraqi leadership said it was granting them a pardon, but the two brothers and another sibling and their father were killed by family members two days after their return, Iraqi official reports said. But few people believe that story and argue that the killings took place with the blessing of the Iraqi government.

Meanwhile, 'Izz-al-Din al-Majid, a brother-in-law of Husayn Kamil on Friday welcomed the defection of Gen al-Khazraji and said he would coordinate with the former army chief of staff whom he described as "one of the cleanest persons in Iraq.

Mr. al-Majid, a major in the Iraqi army and who served as a bodyguard for the president before fleeing to Jordan along with Husayn Kamil in August, said he did not know Gen al-Khazraji personally but said the man was courageous and trusted."

"He is a very credible man known for his honesty among the people of Iraq," Major al-Majid told the JORDAN TIMES. "He is highly respected by Iraqis, including myself. We welcome his defection and look forward to coordinating with him" added Maj. al-Majid, who declined to return to Iraq with Husayn Kamil saying he did not trust the Iraqi regime.

Asked whether he through the defector could work with the Iraqi National Accord Movement, which has a presence in Jordan, Major 'Izz-al-Din said: "We should not look at names at all. We are all working for the same cause. Each has own agendas, but our common goal is to serve the national interest of Iraq."

Jordan: Iraqi Defector Reportedly Neither Requested Nor Given Asylum

MM2503154296 London AL-QUDS AL-'ARABI in Arabic 23/24 Mar 96 p 1

[Unattributed report: "Jordan Backtracks on Its Welcome for al-Khazraji, Stresses He Has Not Been Granted Political Asylum"]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] London, AL-QUDS AL-'ARABI — Jordanian Information Minister Dr. Marwan al-Mu'ashshir has denied that Jordan has granted former Iraqi Chief of Staff Lieutenant General Nizar al-Khazraji political asylum. In a statement to AL-QUDS

AL-'ARABI he said: Lt. Gen. al-Khazraji has not requested asylum, nor has he been granted asylum.

Al-Mu'ashshir said that all that has happened is that the man asked to visit Jordan, and his request was accepted. What REUTER has published about his being granted political asylum is untrue and inaccurate. Asked whether he would be granted political asylum if he submits an application, the minister said that al-Khazraji has not requested asylum. This is a hypothetical question, and it is premature to talk about that. [passage omitted]

Jordan: Damascus TV Reports Amman Received U.S. Fighter Jets

JN2303193196 Damascus Syrian Arab Television Network in Arabic 1830 GMT 23 Mar 96

[Announcer-read report]

[FBIS Translated Text] Jordan received 32 U.S. F-15 and F-16 warplanes. Very urgent: A French bulletin, reports that 100 Jordanian pilots arrived in Tel Aviv to be trained on how to fly these planes.

Jordan: Paper on U.S. Envoy's 'Stormy' Meeting With Businessmen

JN2503102796 Amman AL-HADATH in Arabic 25 Mar 96 p 5

[Unattributed report: "Stormy Encounter Between Jordanian Businessmen and U.S. Ambassador in Amman. Businessmen: We Don't Want Warplanes...We Want Economic Support"]

[FBIS Translated Text] Last week, an interesting and hot meeting was held between the U.S. ambassador and a group of Jordanian businessmen. This meeting was the talk of political parlors in Amman.

The meeting was called by the U.S. ambassador and held at the U.S. Embassy. It was held especially for businessmen who have close contacts with U.S. firms. The meeting, however, turned into an examination of U.S. policy toward Jordan.

According to some businessmen who spoke to AL-HADATH, the ambassador spoke at the outset about his majesty's positive visit to the United States and the lengthy meeting he had with President Clinton aboard the presidential plane on their way to Sharm al-Shaykh. The ambassador added that his majesty also met on the plane with U.S. Secretary of State Christopher and with a U.S. communications expert. The expert was monitoring all contacts throughout the world, including the contacts made by organizations accused of terrorism.

The Jordanian businessmen expressed dissatisfaction with U.S. stands, saying they are not really in support of Jordan. This is especially the case since the U.S. Administration tightened the noose around Jordan by closing its major markets. This caused the economic crisis to deteriorate, and no alternatives were suggested to overcome the severe crisis experienced by Jordan's economy.

The ambassador dismissed these critical remarks, reminding the businessmen that the U.S. Administration had written off Jordan's debts and that it was going to offer Jordan F-16 aircraft. However, most of the attendees rejected what the ambassador said and told him: "We don't need the aircraft. We want economic support."

The ambassador reasserted that aid and support would not resolve Jordan's economic problems. He said this can be done by fighting corruption, which is the cause of indebtedness, and incompetence in the state's agencies. He noted that there are 2,500 employees at the Ministry of Supply.

Addressing the businessmen, the ambassador said: If you want to resolve your economic problem, then get back the $6 billion which Jordanian businessmen deposited abroad. This can solve your problem.

The meeting also discussed the government of Prime Minister 'Abd-al-Karim al-Kabariti and its ability to handle the economic problems. Some businessmen said "the government's honeymoon will be over soon." Others did not hesitate to ask the ambassador to call a meeting between them and al-Kabariti at the Embassy. The ambassador welcomed the idea and said he would do his best.

Jordan: Columnist Criticizes U.S. Aircraft Deployment in Jordan

JN2203171896 Amman SHIHAN in Arabic 23-29 Mar 96 pp 14, 27

[Article by Nahid Hattar: "Now then, Why Layth Shubaylat a Deputy for al-Balqa'?"]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] On the morning of 'Id al-Fitr, Dr. Hisham Ghasib and I went to the al-Juwaydah prison to visit dear Layth Shubaylat and congratulate him on the 'Id and on his landslide victory in the elections of the Engineers Association. I was then contemplating the symbolic and political implications of this victory. [passage omitted]

I am one of the sons of al-Balqa' Governorate who appealed to Layth Shubaylat, the engineers doyen, to become a deputy for our governorate. [passage omitted]

We want Layth as a deputy because we want to circumvent the complex of north, south, and central

[Jordan] by which they [the government organs] are humiliating us and brandishing it over our heads like a sword whenever we raise our heads. From now on, we will only be Jordanians and a unified people who have one identity and one national and pan-Arab affiliation with the dear Arab Jordan. They are now turning Jordan into an alternative homeland, an "Israeli" colony, and a U.S. base for aggression against the Arab brothers who are adhering to their Arab identity. Jordan, however, rejects their plan.

We want Layth as a deputy because he has always been—and still is—one of us. He is well-aware of our pains and he appreciates our glories and raises the banner of our tribes.

We want Layth as a deputy because we want to loudly say at this particular moment what is in our national conscience: We are with Palestine against "Israel." We are with Iraq against the United States. We are with Syria and Lebanon against occupation and Israeli-U.S. terrorism.

Moreover, we are with the national and pan-Arab struggle against capitulation and defeat. We are with Arabism against Middle Easternism! We are with ourselves and with the heritage of our fathers and grandfathers against self-destruction and conspiracy. We are with freedom against despotism. We are with the toilers and with their thoughts, merchandise, and industry against exploitation, corruption, and the concessions of the minority! The U.S. aircraft which land in Jordan do not only sit on Jordanian land but also on our conscience, and they also break our hearts! [passage omitted]

Jordan: Al-Kabariti Promises 'All Forms' of Support to Bahrain

MM2503160196 London AL-HAYAH in Arabic 24 Mar 96 pp 1, 6

[Report by Salamah Ni'mat and Hasan al-Luqays: "Al-Kabariti Tells AL-HAYAH: Jordan Willing To Respond to Any Request Bahrain Submits"]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] Amman, Manama — Jordan said yesterday that it supports the State of Bahrain and its security and stability in the face of any threats, and that in this context it is willing to provide "all forms of political, moral, and material support for Bahrain."

Prime Minister 'Abd-al-Karim al-Kabariti has told AL-HAYAH that Jordan "is prepared to provide all political, moral, and material support" for the State of Bahrain, and that it is up to the Bahraini leadership to "choose the form of support it is seeking from Jordan."

The Jordanian prime minister was answering a question about reports talking of the possibility that Jordan might send troops to help to protect the Gulf state.

Al-Kabariti pointed out that the State of Bahrain has not submitted such a request. However, he did not rule out the participation of Bahraini Air Force personnel in the joint Jordanian-U.S. exercises, scheduled to begin mid-April. [passage omitted]

Jordan: Ex-Consul of Sri Lanka Detained in 'Baby-Sale' Case

JN2503121396 Amman JORDAN TIMES in English 25 Mar 96 pp 12, 7

[Report by a JORDAN TIMES staff reporter]

[FBIS Transcribed Excerpt] Amman—The former honorary consul of Sri Lanka who is under investigation in an unprecedented case in Jordan of alleged trading in babies was moved on Sunday to prison from hospital, security sources said.

It appeared meanwhile that the hometown in Sri Lanka of a locally-hired employee at the honorary consulate had hit media headlines in the early 80s after some of its residents allegedly sold their babies to foreigners.

In another development, a Sri Lankan minister told BBC's Sinhalese service that the Colombo government was sending an official to Jordan by the end of this month to take over consular work and follow up on the alleged "baby-sale" cases involving the consulate, according to Sri Lankans who monitored the radio.

The Sri Lankan Foreign Ministry, in a statement issued on Friday, dismissed its honorary consul, a prominent Jordanian businessman, following his arrest in connection with the alleged sale of illegitimate babies born to Sri Lankan women working in Jordan.

The consul had been admitted to hospital under police custody after he suffered from a heart attack when informed of police findings of incriminating evidence in the consulate.

Security sources said he was moved to the al-Juwaydah prison from hospital after he was found to have recovered from the effects of the heart attack he suffered. [passage omitted]

Jordan: 3 Arrested for Planning Suicide Attacks Against Israelis

JN2303124296 Amman AL-ASWAQ in Arabic 23 Mar 96 pp 1, 17

[Report by Ma'mun al-Rusan]

[FBIS Translated Text] Well-informed judiciary sources said that (A.G.), (Y.R.), and (A.F.) from 'Ajlun Governorate were arrested last month after competent security quarters received information of plans to carry out suicide operations against Israeli tourist buses in Jordan in an attempt to disrupt security and the peace process.

The sources said that the three detainees had in their possession 24 anti-tank mines, which they obtained from mine fields near the Jordanian-Israeli borders, and which the Jordanian Army had planted after the 1967 war. The three also had many ready-to-use detonators, machine guns, and explosive belts similar to those used by suicide bombers from the 'Izz-al-Din al-Qassam battalions in their recent operations in Israel.

Explosives experts detonated seven of the mines after deciding it would be dangerous to move or keep them. Each of these anti-tank mines has enormous destructive capacity, and could totally destroy a four-story building.

These sources said that the three detainees confessed their plans to the prosecutor general of the State Security Court. They gave detailed confessions about the operations they were planning, and acted out what they planned to do in front of the prosecutor general and competent quarters last week.

The sources added that the explosives found in the detainees' possession were extremely dangerous and were ready for use. This indicates that one of the detainees is an explosives expert and fully versed in explosive devices.

The three detainees will soon be referred to the State Security Court for trial, after Major Mahmud 'Ubaydat, prosecutor general of the State Security Court, prepares a bill of indictment against them.

Jordan: Aims, Details of Security Crackdown Viewed

MM2503144496 London AL-SHARQ AL-AWSAT in Arabic 24 Mar 96 pp 1, 4

[Unattributed report: "Jordan Arrests Armed Network for Planning Attacks Against Israeli Tourists"]

[FBIS Translated Text] London, Amman, AL-SHARQ AL-AWSAT — The Jordanian authorities have arrested a new network for planning to carry out violent operations against buses that normally transport Israeli tourists inside Jordan. Informed Jordanian sources have told AL-SHARQ AL-AWSAT that the authorities confiscated from members of the network mines and explosives stolen from the Jordanian Army's old depots in the border areas.

The new arrests coincided with reports of Jordan's announcement of a state of emergency and full alert on its border with Israel and the Palestinian self-rule areas to prevent any infiltrations across the border from points other than the legal crossings. The Jordanian authorities have also tightened security measures in more than one area in Jordan, especially the areas where Iraqis reside, in addition to the Palestinian camps and surrounding areas.

The sources said that these extensive measures have been adopted since the first arrest campaign announced by the Jordanian authorities, which included Jordanian, Palestinian, and Iraqi elements. According to the sources, the aim behind all these measures is to prevent the elements opposed to Israel from making any move inside or outside Jordan. The sources added that competent Jordanian authorities have set up extensive military observation posts along the border with Jordan [as published] and the Palestinians, whose task is to thoroughly search the vehicles passing through the area and to scrutinize the identity of people, especially young drivers of tourist buses.

These measures are also aimed at combating infiltration operations into Israel and the self-rule area to carry out suicide operations. They are also aimed at combating the smuggling of all types of arms, including guns and explosives, especially as Jordan has announced the uncovering of 36 attempts to undermine its security and stability recently.

Jordan denies any link between these tight security measures and the Sharm al-Shaykh summit, which stressed the need to put an end to terrorist and extremist actions and urged cooperation among the parties concerned with the peace process with a view to eradicating terrorism and making the peace process a success.

Furthermore, the Jordanian authorities have intensified their precautionary and tight security measures on the border with both Syria and Iraq with a view to monitoring the extremist groups' movements and activities inside Jordan and putting them under a close watch to prevent these groups from making any contacts with regional forces in the region via Jordan.

Jordan: Palestinian Security Delegation Holds Talks, Departs

JN2303210196 Amman AL-MASHRIQ in Arabic 23 Mar 96 p 6

[Report by Muhammad Mashariqah]

[FBIS Translated Text] A high-ranking Palestinian security delegation led by Tariq Abu-Rajab [not further identified] which includes ranking Palestinian security and intelligence officials as well as representatives of all security organs in the self-rule areas, left Amman this morning [as published].

Sources in Amman said Prime Minister 'Abd-al-Karim al-Kabariti received the delegation last Thursday in a meeting that was attended by a number of security officials. Talks dealt with the political and security results of the wave of terrorist operations in Israel. The talks also addressed the results of Jordanian security officials' interrogations of members of the Hamas [Islamic Resistance] Movement and the Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan who were arrested recently. Islamic quarters estimated the number of those arrested at more than 40.

Palestinian security sources said the two sides exchanged data on magnetic disks and lists of suspects who are suspected of having links with recent military operations by Hamas. The sources said the Jordanian side showed understanding of the Palestinian fears of the renewal of suicide operations. The source said agreement was reached on setting up a liaison security committee to continue the coordination process between officials of the two countries.

Ziyad al-Majali, Jordanian ambassador to the Palestinian Authority held daily intensive talks with al-Tayyib 'Abd-al-Rahim, secretary general of the presidency, with the aim of eliminating all forms of tension between Gaza and Amman. These efforts resulted in the visit by the Palestinian security delegation to Amman.

Meanwhile, a ranking Palestinian Authority official said information was received by the leadership saying that Iran is forming a new Islamic force named the Islamic Liberation Army to confront the moderate inclinations beginning to prevail within the Hamas leadership and to be a revolutionary alternative to the movement.

Tehran received a number of hawkish Hamas leaders over the past weeks. The Iranian security and political delegation, which is visiting Lebanon these days to arrange the conditions of Hizballah and to prepare the party to enter the next stage, met with a number of renegade Hamas leaders and discussed with them establishing the Islamic Liberation Army.

On the campaign which the authority organs are launching against Hamas leaders and members, the Palestinian official said the size and the intensity of the campaign increased last week after the statement issued by Hamas on the eve of Sharm al-Shaykh summit. In the statement Hamas announced that it is prepared to start political negotiations with Israel as a strong partner that is an alternative to the Palestinian Authority led by 'Arafat. The Palestinian official said the statement was the decisive turning point in the relationship between the authority and Hamas. The two parties were eager to calm the situation at this stage, but Hamas violated all principles and exposed its objectives and the powers that support it. This led the security organs to launch systematic campaigns to destroy the whole infrastructure of the movement. This was carried out in a very calm manner amid popular support.

Jordan: Al-Mu'ashshir Denies Ghawshah Under House Arrest

JN2203181596 Amman AL-RA'Y in Arabic 22 Mar 96 p 1

[FBIS Translated Text] Amman — AL-RA'Y — Information Minister Marwan al-Mu'ashshir denied press reports that the Jordanian Government placed Ibrahim Ghawshah, the media spokesman for the [Islamic Resistance Movement] Hamas, under house arrest. He said these reports are baseless.

Jordan: King Undergoes 'Successful' Ear Surgery in U.S.

JN2403092396 Amman Radio Jordan Network in Arabic 0500 GMT 24 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Lieutenant General Dr. Samir Farraj, His Majesty King Husayn's private doctor, said that His Majesty King Husayn underwent scheduled surgery on his right ear at the Saint Vincent Hospital in the United States yesterday morning, 23 March. Preliminary results indicate that the surgery was successful and without complications, praise be to God. His majesty, may God protect him, is in good health.

Jordan: Energy Minister Confirms No Increase in Radiation Levels

JN2403213796 Amman Radio Jordan Network in Arabic 1200 GMT 24 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Dr. Hashim al-Dabbas, minister of energy and mineral resources, commented on some media reports about the possibility of radiation leakage from the Israeli nuclear reactor at Dimona over time. He said that the ministry continues to test and monitor radiation levels in various parts of the Kingdom. He asserted that the test results confirm that there is no increase in these levels. In a statement to our radio, al-Dabbas said:

[Begin al-Dabbas recording] Some Jordanian newspapers reported that there is radiation leakage from the Israeli reactor in Dimona. This information came from a seminar carried on Israeli Television. Just as soon as the report was published in Jordanian newspapers, competent bodies at the Ministry of Energy's Nuclear Energy Directorate expeditiously went to our stations throughout the Kingdom that gauge and monitor the radiation levels and took samples from each area. There was no increase in the radiation levels in each area that was tested. The levels were normal and in line with the Kingdom's environmental reality. There is no radiation in Jordan. I believe the seminar, which was broadcast from Israel and reported by some newspapers, consisted of television observations regarding future expectations of a leak.

The ministry continues to conduct tests at every station and laboratory throughout the Kingdom. We want to reassure the public that we will continue to test every phenomena. Anything that happens in the future will be announced. [end recording]

Lebanon: Al-Hariri Discusses Hizballah, Palestinians

NC2203140596 Cairo AL-AHRAM in Arabic 16 Mar 96 pp 3, 5

[Interview with Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq al-Hariri by Ibrahim Nafi' in Beirut on 11 March]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] [Nafi'] Israel believes — and perhaps the Western world supports it in this view — that Lebanon is the weak link in the Arab-Israeli conflict and for this reason negotiations on the Lebanese-Israeli track have been generally slow. Is this true, both theoretically and in fact?

[Al-Hariri] We are not claiming that Lebanon is a big, strong country. It is a small country that has been weakened by war. However, it has many special qualities. It has economic potential and a free enterprise system. Its people are very industrious and for this reason our country has an impact that exceeds its geographic and demographic size. I believe, however, that the slow pace of negotiations on the Lebanese track is a result of the arrangements made by the United States, a sponsor of the peace process. The United States decided to wait for Israel's negotiations with the Palestinians and the Jordanians be completed first. The Syrians would come next, because of the complex problems between Syria and Israel. There are problems between Lebanon and Israel, but they are different problems. Israel thinks Syria poses a strategic threat to it but Lebanon does not. Lebanon only poses a security problem to Israel because of the resistance operations carried out against the Israeli occupation, but Israel is aware of Lebanon's true military capabilities and hence does not see Lebanon as a strategic threat. Israel takes Syria's strategic military capability seriously, and therefore the type of problems it has with Syria are totally different. We think that once the big problems between Syria and Israel are solved, the pace on the Lebanese-Israeli track will quicken, even before the Syrian-Israeli negotiations end.

[Nafi'] Some people think a political settlement between Lebanon and Israel hinges on the successful conclusion of a Syrian-Israeli settlement. Is this true?

[Al-Hariri] Invitations to the negotiations normally come from the two sponsor countries: the United States and Russia. The United States has not invited Lebanon to resume negotiations with Israel. Moreover, it can be said conversely that the Syrian-Israeli negotiations are linked to the Lebanese track, especially as there is a Syrian-Lebanese agreement on this issue. The Syrians will not sign a peace agreement before we do, and we will not sign one before they do. The negotiations between Syria and Israel have no doubt made some progress and will progress further, but they will not reach the point where an agreement must be signed before Lebanon completes its own negotiations with Israel. [passage omitted]

[Nafi'] What is your assessment of the role played in south Lebanon by Hizballah and the Lebanese national resistance forces in general? Do you coordinate politically with them? Does the Lebanese Government back them or deter them? Israel claims it is continuing its occupation of the south because Hizballah fighters are there.

[Al-Hariri] First of all, there was Israeli occupation of south Lebanon before Hizballah appeared. Hence it is unacceptable to claim that Israel is in the south because of Hizballah. Israeli occupation of south Lebanon dates back to 1978 when there was no such thing as Hizballah. This is an Israeli pretext to prolong the occupation. Secondly, Israel refuses to recognize or discuss UN Security Council Resolution 425, which calls on it to withdraw unconditionally from the occupied Lebanese territories. Because of this attitude, we are suspicious of Israel's real intentions. Nevertheless, we have joined in the negotiations to liberate our occupied territories. The resistance is a reaction to the occupation, and this is a normal thing anywhere in the world. No one can prevent the population from fighting those who occupy their land. When people ask why we do not disarm Hizballah or other resistance groups, we answer as would any other country, were its territories occupied. As long as the occupation continues, how can Lebanon carry out military actions against citizens who are resisting the occupier? If we do that we will be making it easier for the occupiers. That is impossible. After peace comes — and this should mean after the end of the occupation — there will no longer be any need for resistance operations. We say the resistance is caused by the occupation. If the occupation ends, there will be no need for a resistance movement.

[Nafi'] How can you solve the problem of the approximately 350,000 Palestinian refugees in Lebanon? Is their return to the Palestinian land possible, or do you think the Palestinians will be settled [in Lebanon]?

[Al-Hariri] These refugees should return to Palestine. Negotiations should be held within the context of the peace process in order to return them to the land from which they were evicted. Settling them here, or naturalization, is impossible, because that would affect the existing structure of Lebanon, particularly from the demographic and political perspective. If this were to happen, we would be steering the country into new dilemmas, and that we will never do. Our status is unlike any other country's. Responsibly, we cannot approve this matter.

[Nafi'] Let me ask you frankly: Many people note that the Lebanese arena is open to extremist organizations on the pretext that Lebanon is a democratic country open to everyone. However, these extremist organizations take advantage of this situation to kill innocent people. What do you think of this sensitive issue?

[Al-Hariri] This is a great exageration, for which there is no evidence. It is true that Lebanon is a democratic country but that does not mean its security is lax. Security was indeed lax in the past and during the war years, but things are now under control. There is the resistance issue in the south, which attracts many people who have faith in it. Within this context, Lebanese and other groups have joined the resistance. This is not something new. It has actually happened in many occupied countries. The groups that join the resistance are convinced they have a right to resist the occupation; this is exactly what happened during the Nazi occupation of several countries. Once the occupation ceases to exist, the resistance will disappear. No doubt, the liberation of our land will affect the country positively and will result in a reorganization favorable to Lebanon. [passage omitted]

[Nafi'] Some Arab capitals complain that Hizballah is training extremist cadres from various Arab countries and then sending them back to their countries. Even Turkey says that members of the Workers Party of Kurdistan are being trained at a base in Lebanon. What are you doing about this thorny situation, and how do you propose to combat extremism and terrorism on the Lebanese, Arab, and international level?

[Al-Hariri] Needless to say, we are against this phenomenon, but I do not think it exists the way you said. I am afraid there is a misunderstanding concerning Arab citizens who believe in the resistance and who might join the resistance against the Israeli occupation. We have seen this in societies other than Lebanon. Some Arabs come to Lebanon to participate in the resistance to Israel. I believe the two groups are being confused. We, however, are against this. Were things as you said, it would be apparent to all. We sometimes hear of Arab citizens who have joined the resistance. However, we absolutely do not approve of their being trained here and then going back to carry out certain acts.

[Nafi'] There are international reports to this effect, and there is a danger that they might be blown out of proportion. How can this issue be treated at the Lebanese and Arab levels?

[Al-Hariri] I repeat clearly that we are against all these things without reservation. We do not approve of them and we think they harm Lebanon. No one has any right to undertake such acts in Lebanon. [passage omitted]

[Nafi'] It seems that there has been a clash between the government and the press. Is it true that this was due to the government's attempt to dominate the media by passing the recent law?

[Al-Hariri] The reason for the clash is, in fact, political. Our critics say we are organizing the media in order to control it, and that we want to license six television stations — including the state station — so that we can dominate the media. It is also being said that the six licenses will include one for a future television station that I personally own. According to some reports, [Chamber of Deputies] Speaker Nabih Birri will obtain a license for a private television, as will Hizballah, in addition to LBC [Lebanese Broadcasting Corporation] and MTV. How, then, can the state dominate the media?

Taking an objective look at the names, we find that they are all from the opposition. Hizballah is not a party loyal to the government. Nor are Speaker Birri, LBC, or MTV. Such claims are refuted the minute you hear the rumored names. I believe the rumors are inaccurate. It is not yet known who will obtain a license. Applications remain to be submitted and examined. The best applicants will be granted licenses.

As for why we stipulate six stations: Technically, the Lebanese airwaves cannot absorb more than that number. That is why. It is not because we want to divide the stations among ourselves, as is being claimed. Most of the people who say they will get a license are not on pro-government. [passage omitted]

The situation right now is that there are television and radio stations that are 100 percent in opposition. This does not happen anywhere else in the world; no democratic state has an opposition television station. There are stations that present the views of both the opposition and the loyalists, as is the case in France, Britain, Germany, Italy, and other countries. But itis not possible to establish an opposition television station. Television is not like a newspaper, which a person buys of his own free will. Television and radio enter all homes without permission. All over the world there are laws that govern the audiovisual media. These are different from the laws that govern the press. [passage omitted]

[Nafi'] If Lebanon reaches a peace agreement with Israel, what will Hizballah's fate be, how will you handle the arsenals, and how will they be absorbed into the fabric of Lebanese society?

[Al-Hariri] In Lebanon's case, the resistance is a reaction to the occupation. If the occupation ends, there will be no need for the resistance, and all will surrender their weapons to the Lebanese state. In that case Hizballah's activity will be limited to politics. It is an established party that represents a certain political current of a certain size. It participates in elections and wins two, five, or even ten seats. In other words, it is represented in the parliament according to its popularity and the support it gets. [passage omitted]

Lebanon: Buwayz Expects Israeli Military Operation

NC2203175196 Beirut Radio Lebanon in Arabic 1630 GMT 22 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Foreign Minister Faris Buwayz said that Lebanon is not enthusiastic about accepting the invitation it received today from U.S. Ambassador Richard Jones to attend the Washington meeting of the committee that resulted from the Sharm al-Shaykh summit since this committee is part of the summit that Lebanon did not participate in.

Minister Buwayz did not rule out an Israeli military operation in the south. He hopes, however, Israel will be sensible after the international contacts made with it recently to deter such an operation. Here is what Minister Buwayz said:

[Begin recording] [Correspondent] Did the U.S. ambassador brief you on the outcome of U.S. contacts with Israel and Syria to avert threats?

[Buwayz] Over the past few days, we were in constant contact with the United States and a number of friendly states to cope with the Israeli warnings, or rather threats against the south. It is known that most of these states held intensified meetings to put pressure on Israel to calm the situation.

[Correspondent] [question indistinct]

[Buwayz] I said earlier that the tense feelings and situation inside Israel provides warnings of counteractions to the incidents that occurred in Israel in the past few weeks to let out these sentiments. A close look at the statements, positions, visits to the south, and the preparations makes us realize that Israeli is possibly contemplating some operation. The goals and features of such an operation remain unknown. In other words, no one can predict the Israeli reaction.

[Correspondent] Has the U.S. ambassador insinuated that an attack might occur?

[Buwayz] There has been a clear Israeli mobilization in the past few days. We hope the international contacts will overcome the problem. [end recording]

Lebanon: Hizballah Prepared To Respond to Aggression

NC2203181296 Beirut Radio Lebanon in Arabic 1630 GMT 22 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Hizballah Deputy Leader Shaykh Na'im Qasim today pointed out that any Israeli aggression will be countered by a defensive response by the party. He said that the party has taken the necessary measures to respond to any attempted attack.

He affirmed that the rockets that are fired at northern Palestine are due to the Israeli aggression on civilians and peaceful villages. He said if the aggression stops, the rocket attacks will stop.

Qasim added that the party performance in the military field stems from its belief in direct confrontation with the enemy soldiers in the occupied area of south Lebanon. He said that the party does believe in firing rockets constantly at northern Palestine or other areas.

Meanwhile, the Israeli occupation troops continued their aggression against the liberated areas in the south and western al-Biqa' today. Enemy warplanes flew many sorties in the Lebanese airspace.

The areas of Mazra'at al-Hamra' and Hima Arnun came under 155-mm artillery fire from the occupation positions in Qal'at al-Shaqif and the Israeli helicopters continued to fly over the villages of the area, conducting a wide-range operation with heavy-caliber machine guns in the forests of al-Wadi al-Akhdar, the Litani river basin, Wadi al-Saluqi, and Wadi al-Hujayr.

In a related development, the Lebanese Army's chief of staff, Major General Riyadh Taqiy-al-Din, today inspected the army units in western al-Biwqa'. He toured the front lines and inspected the measures adopted in accordance with the leadership decision to stand fast to any Israeli aggression.

He gave the necessary orders to the military.

Lebanon: Ministers, Shiite Clergy on Prospects for Israeli Attack

NC2203193096 Beirut Voice of Lebanon in Arabic 1715 GMT 22 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] After an audience with President Ilyas al-Hirawi, Michel al-Murr, deputy prime minister and minister of interior, asserted that the state is aware of the possibility of Israel's carrying out a hostile action. However, he ruled out a large military operation because such an operation would harm Israeli Prime Minister Shim`on Peres as the date for Israeli elections draws nearer.

Defense Minister Muhsin Dallul stressed that the Lebanese Army has been on alert for several days now to confront any Israeli aggression as far as possible. He did not rule out the possibility of Israel carrying out a military attack on Lebanon. Dallul said this would be costly for the Israeli Army and bring down the peace process, adding that Israel would be responsible for this.

Shaykh Muhammad Mahdi Shams-al-Din, chairman of the Higher Islamic Shiite Council, has emphasized that the Lebanese people will confront any Israeli aggression. He noted that a settlement can be effected by the Israeli Army's withdrawing and by the Lebanese Army and security forces taking control over all Lebanese territory.

Mufti 'Abd-al-Amir Qabalan, deputy chairman of the Higher Islamic Shiite Council, called on the Lebanese people to heighten unity and put national interest first because citizenry's survival is being threatened.

'Allamah Muhammad Husayn Fadlallah said if Israel invades, it will kill hundreds of Lebanese, but it will also lose many of its own soldiers and civilians. He added: If the inhabitants of the south are displaced, the residents of [Israeli] settlements will also be displaced. He noted that an invasion of Lebanon will require certain security and political circumstances.

Also in his Friday sermon, [former Hizballah secretary general] Shaykh Subhi al-Tufayli said: We have a direct responsibility to confront Israel because the liberation of land is a duty of the population and the men of the resistance.

Lebanon: Defense Minister, Islamic Figures React to Israeli Threat

NC2303070096 Beirut Radio Lebanon in Arabic 0530 GMT 23 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Defense Minister Muhsin Dallul has stated that any Israeli act of aggression against Lebanon will be costly. He held Israel responsible for the failure of the peace process. He stressed the unity of the Lebanese and Syrian tracks in the peace process. He emphasized the resistance's right to fight in defense of the occupied territory in the south and the western al-Biqa'.

Shaykh Muhammad Shams-al-Din, chairman of the Higher Islamic Shiite Council, has asserted that the entire Lebanese people will confront any Israeli aggression. He stressed that resistance is a natural right to confront Israel's oppression and repression in Lebanon and occupied Palestine. He said that the Israeli threats will not bring about a settlement. A settlement, he said, can be reached through Israeli army withdrawal and the Lebanese Army and security forces exercising their duties on all Lebanese territory.

Shaykh 'Abd-al-Amir Qabalan, Deputy chairman of the Higher Islamic Shiite Council, urged the Lebanese to cement their unity and put national interests first and foremost because the homeland is being threatened. He stressed that resistance is our only weapon to liberate the Lebanese territories. He criticized the United States for demanding that Lebanon and Syria pressure Hizballah to stop its attacks instead of demanding that Israel withdraw its forces from the Lebanese territories.

Lebanon: Hizballah's Qasim Links Katyusha Firing to Israeli Shelling

NC2303075296 Ba'labakk Voice of the Oppressed in Arabic 0630 GMT 23 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Hizballah Deputy Secretary General Shaykh Na'im Qasim has underlined that Israel has tried all kinds of aggressive tactics. He emphasized that Hizballah has taken every precaution to repulse any aggression. He said that the issue of the resistance's penetration of the occupied border strip is not new. He said that the area is unsafe for the Israelis, who have discovered that they are unsafe even in areas where they fortify themselves.

Regarding the July understanding [1993 understanding to stop hostilities after Israeli week-long air raids on south Lebanon], Qasim said that it was an Israeli capitulation due to the resistance's actions. We declared after the Israeli incursion that the rockets we fired at north Palestine were linked to acts of aggression against civilians and defenseless villages. He said: If aggression stops, the rockets will stop. He said that Uri Lubrani knows well that when civilians are attacked, Katyusha rockets will fall on occupied north Palestine. He said any aggression will be countered by all means available to us.

Lebanon: Hizballah Slams Arab, World Silence About Israeli 'Crimes'

NC2303080296 Ba'labakk Voice of the Oppressed in Arabic 0630 GMT 23 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Hizballah has criticized the Arab and international silence about Israel's organized crimes against the Palestinian people as shown in the demolition of their homes, deportations, and threats. In a statement just released, Hizballah says this devilish, cold-blooded policy will prompt the Palestinian people to opt for confrontation and jihad and to (?renounce) the 'Arafat Authority, which is unable to protect them and which has contributed to their current misery and trouble.

Hizballah's statement says that the Arab and international silence about these crimes is proof of collusion and collaboration. This policy will not silence or stifle the voice of jihad but will make it grow louder and stronger and will exacerbate matters for the Zionists and the arrogant powers that are working to terrorize peoples into accepting crumbs and humiliating settlements.

Lebanon: Buwayz on Israeli Demand on Hizballah, Iranian Response

NC2303085996 Beirut Voice of Lebanon in Arabic 0615 GMT 23 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Yesterday Foreign Minister Faris Buwayz sent two messages, one to Israel and the other to Iran. In response to a statement by Israeli Foreign Minister Ehud Baraq's calling on the Lebanese Government to dismantle Hizballah's infrastructure, he said that the Lebanese Government cannot act as an Israeli border guard.

In his response to a statement released by the Iranian Embassy in Beirut, Buwayz said that the Iranian Embassy should have responded only to the clause that relates to Iran. He said: I hope that no one will presume to speak on behalf of Lebanon.

Lebanon: Officials Cited on Israeli 'Threats,' U.S. Position

NC2303190596 Beirut Radio Lebanon in Arabic 1630 GMT 23 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] As part of the efforts to strengthen the southerners' steadfastness, Chamber of Deputies Speaker Nabih Birri today visited frontline villages in al-Nabatiyah and the central sector. He listened to the residents' demands and needs.

Speaker Birri said that, by its threats and continuous intimidation of Lebanon and the south, Israel is trying to regain its prestige and escape from its domestic crisis. He noted that the current situation the region is experiencing is the most difficult one in our history.

Defense Minister Muhsin Dallul said any Israeli aggression against Lebanon will not force us to accept a peace we do not desire and a peace that threatens our unity. We are very dedicated to our unity, he added.

At a public gathering today, he said the reluctance to support Lebanon is attributed to a desire to keep Lebanon politically subject to the superpower's wish. This superpower, he added, has launched a campaign against Lebanon beginning with the U.S. State Department's statement. The statement falsely accused Lebanon of cultivating narcotics and not respecting man without mentioning the thousands of Lebanese detainees in the occupation's jails. [passage omitted]

Deputy Ahmad 'Ajami said the current situation revolves around forceful efforts to spread the U.S.-Israeli peace process that we completely reject. He added: We cling to our legitimate right to resist the occupation and demand the implementation of UN resolutions to achieve a just and comprehensive peace.

Shaykh 'Abd-al-Amir Qabalan, deputy chairman of the Higher Islamic Shiite Council, said what is required is the deterrence of Israel by putting an end to its acts of aggression and pressuring it into implementing Resolution 425.

In a speech today, he urged those enrolled in Lahd's militia [South Lebanese Army] to lay down their arms and return to their families and homeland. He asked the state and the army to accept anyone who refuses to remain a shield for the Israeli occupation forces. He criticized the Arabs who have forsaken the rightful Arab causes by participating in the Sharm al-Shaykh summit. He urged them to adopt a bold stand and reconsider their thinking.

Lebanon: Israelis Build Up Military Forces in Southern Security Zone

NC2403062196 Beirut Radio Lebanon in Arabic 0530 GMT 24 Mar 96

[Report by Muhammad Shakkur in southern Lebanon—recorded]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] The Israeli occupation forces resumed their attacks on southern villages during last night and this morning. The Israeli attacks began at 2000 last night with fierce 120-mm and 155-mm artillery bombardment of several villages in Iqlim al-Tuffah, particularly 'Arab Salim, Habbush, al-Wadi al-Akhdar, al-Jabal al-Rafi', Luwayzah, and Mlikh. At 2230, the Israeli forces stepped up their attacks on the villages of al-Nabatiyah al-Fawqa, the Army's deserted barracks, Kafr Tibnit, Mazra'at al-Hamra', Zawtar al-Sharqiyah, Zawtar al-Gharbiyah, Arnun, and Yuhmur. [passage omitted]

According to sources inside the occupied strip, the Israeli forces have reinforced their presence, movements, and checkpoints inside the occupied land. The sources reiterated that the Israeli forces had intensified their military buildup in areas adjacent to the liberated areas. Columns of Israeli armored cars were seen on the al-Jarmaq-al-'Ayshiyah road as well as in al-Rayhan and Kafr Huna. Meanwhile, the occupation forces continue to raid houses in the besieged towns of Rabb al-Thalathin and al-'Udaysah.

Lebanon: Hizballah Denies Change in 'Understanding' With Israel

NC2503080096 Ba'labakk Voice of the Oppressed in Arabic 0630 GMT 25 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] With a decrease in the intensity of fiery Zionist threats and statements against Lebanon, and with some sources suggesting that this could be a sign of calm after the United States' contacts with Syria, Lebanon, and Israel, Hizballah has denied that it has scaled back its activity. Hizballah has stated that Resistance operations will continue as long as the Zionist occupation continues. A responsible party source said no contacts have taken place between Hizballah and Damascus or Lebanese officials. The same source ridiculed any talk about an amendment in the July understanding [between Hizballah and Israel] on stopping Resistance operations in the occupied strip. The same source said that talk of such contacts is nothing more than delusion on the part of the United States and Israel and a secret desire for something like this to happen. The source said resistance will continue as long as the occupation continues and that events in the arena will prove the truth of this. The source described the extensive campaign as a diplomatic and political attempt aiming to justify Israel's inability to carry out useless and costly military operations.

Lebanon: Invitation to Sharm al-Shaykh Follow-up Meeting Received

NC2203121996 Beirut Voice of Lebanon in Arabic 1115 GMT 22 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Foreign Minister Faris Buwayz announced that he received from U.S. Ambassador Richard Jones a new invitation to a meeting of the Sharm al-Shaykh follow-up committee in Washington on 28-29 March. He said he will consult with the president and the prime minister to make the appropriate decision. Buwayz added: Since this meeting is part of the Sharm al-Shaykh summit, and since those who will attend it will be forced to sit with Israeli political, military, and intelligence officials, we will perhaps not be enthusiastic to accept the invitation.

Lebanon: Diplomatic Ties With Iran Said 'Chilly'

NC2403174196 Cairo MENA in Arabic 1455 GMT 24 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Beirut, 24 Mar (MENA)—Informed Lebanese sources have revealed that diplomatic ties between Lebanon and Iran are currently chilly. This follows Lebanese Foreign Minister Faris Buwayz' recent sharp criticism of a statement released by the Iranian Embassy in Beirut on Iran's stance on various issues concerning developments in Lebanon. The sources said diplomatic contacts are now under way between the two countries to clarify their stands. Faris Buwayz had asked the Iranian Embassy not to adopt Lebanese stands and said the Lebanese Government is able to express its own stands and interests, rejecting interference in his country's internal affairs.

Lebanon: Iranian Diplomat—'Misunderstanding' Not 'Crisis' in Ties

MM2503114696 London AL-SHARQ AL-AWSAT in Arabic 25 Mar 96 pp 1, 4

[Report by Ibrahim 'Awad: "Tehran: 'Misunderstanding,' Not Crisis, With Beirut"]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] Beirut — The Iranian Embassy in Beirut yesterday played down the dispute between the two countries over what the Lebanese Foreign Ministry termed interference in Lebanon's internal affairs. The Embassy described what happened as "no more than a misunderstanding."

An authoritative source at the Iranian Embassy in Beirut stressed to AL-SHARQ AL-AWSAT yesterday Iran's eagerness to safeguard its relations with Lebanon, denying the existence of any signs of a crisis between Beirut and Tehran following Lebanese Foreign Minister Faris Buwayz' statement on Friday [22 March], in which he urged the Iranian Embassy in Beirut "not to speak on Lebanon's behalf, because that is unacceptable." [passage omitted]

The authoritative Iranian source strongly denied to AL-SHARQ AL-AWSAT over the telephone the existence of any problem between Iran and Lebanon. He said that "what has been reported recently and on which some media have tried to focus is no more than a misunderstanding." The source said that "the bet in this connection is a losing one," stressing that "the constant values governing relations between Beirut and Tehran, in addition to local and regional requirements for these relations, are so strong to be affected by an incitement here or there."

Lebanon: Israeli Forces Demolish Hizballah Man's Hideout in South

TA2203193596 Jerusalem Israel Television Channel 1 Network in Hebrew 1700 GMT 22 Mar 96

[Announcer-read report]

[FBIS Translated Text] The security forces today demolished the house in south Lebanon where the Hizballah man who staged the suicide attack in the security zone this week hid.

Lebanon: Legal Status of South Lebanon Army, Lahd

96AA0163B London AL-MAJALLAH in Arabic 18-24 Feb 96 p 28

[FBIS Translated Text] The Studies and Documentation Advisory Center in Lebanon has published a legal study about the legal status of the members of Lahd's army, according to the Lebanese penal code. The study discusses whether the Lebanese penal code applies to "the agents" in Lahd's army.

The study concludes that more than one crime in the list of treason crimes apply to Israel's agents. The punishment for such crimes ranges between temporary detention and execution. Most of the conscripts in Lahd's army deserve sentences of hard labor for life or execution.

The study refers to mitigating circumstances that could reduce the sentences. It notes that each agent in the South Lebanon Army can use the mitigating circumstances under Article 4272 if they apply to his situation and if he cooperates with the government in combating the conspiracy of this militia, revealing its plans, and surrendering to the Lebanese authorities.

The study also refers to the provisions regarding the passage of time, which say that if a crime takes place and 10 years have lapsed since the date of the crime and no investigation was conducted during that period, the case will be dropped.

If a case was filed during the 10 years and investigations were conducted, but no sentences were issued, the case will be dropped after 10 years.

The study affirms that based on the provision of article 363 of the rules of criminal trials, the body that can look into crimes against state security is the judicial council, based on a decree by the Council of Ministers.

Lebanon: Syria Said Trying To Cool Down Hizballah at U.S. Request

MM2203121496 London AL-SHARQ AL-AWSAT in Arabic 22 Mar 96 pp 1, 4

[Unattributed report: "Syria Working at U.S. Request To Cool Off Southern Lebanon"]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] Beirut, London, AL-SHARQ AL-AWSAT — Beirut revealed yesterday that Syria is trying to persuade Hizballah to "cool off" its operations in the south, while Hizballah Secretary General Hasan Nasrallah proposed a return to the "Katyusha agreement" stipulating a halt to the shelling of Israeli settlements in Galilee in return for a halt to Israel's bombardment of Lebanese civilians, stressing that "the only way to prevent Israeli settlements from being harmed is not to harm Lebanese civilians."

A senior Lebanese says that Lebanon is now standing at a difficult crossroads, since its land is the only land targeted by Israel and the only land used as a staging post for the resistance against the Israeli occupation.

The official adds that, if U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher succeeded a few years ago in curbing the operations launched against northern Israel and in limiting them to the occupied area of southern Lebanon, it is clear now, following the Sharm al-Shaykh summit, that the required thing is to curb the operations completely, and there is one option: through dialogue or war.

The official says that Lebanese officials realized what swift change is required and thus they have made extensive contacts with the Syrians to get them to calm down Hizballah, their main ally, and to take further control of the internal situation until it is time to go to the negotiating table.

In the light of these considerations, Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq al-Hariri has begun to warn the Palestinians of the need to observe the rules of Lebanese "hospitality," while Syria — at a clear request from the United States and in response to an open Arab wish — has assumed the task of cooling down Hizballah in order to prevent the collapse of the peace process. [passage omitted]

Syria: Press on 'Futility' of Israel's Use of Force in Lebanon

JN2303101696 Damascus Syrian Arab Republic Radio Network in Arabic 0545 GMT 23 Mar 96

[Press review]

[FBIS Translated Text] In its editorial, the newspaper TISHRIN says that the heightened tension and escalation in southern Lebanon show the futility of the use of force or military adventures by Israel. Israeli officials have acknowledged that the solution to this situation is political. This is true, because the aggravation of the situation in southern Lebanon was never caused by the Lebanese national resistance. It is the occupation that caused this aggravation. It follows from this that the dismantlement of occupation in compliance with Resolution 425 would nullify all manifestations of tension and worry.

TISHRIN adds: This is impossible to achieve unless Israel effects complete withdrawal from southern Lebanon in compliance with the land-for-peace formula, which is the bedrock of the peace process. Nonetheless, Israel has chosen to overlook such a solution. It has wriggled out of the peace process, disavowed its bases and principles on the Syrian and Lebanese tracks of negotiations, and halted the Maryland talks under pressure from the extremist and rightist parties in Israel. These very parties are making growing and increasing calls for aggression against southern Lebanon. The occupation troops and the Lahd militia have been put on alert under a heavy screen of alleged and flimsy security pretexts. These are the signs of an aggressive scheme aimed at killing the peace process to fulfill the wishes of Israeli settlers and religious and extremist forces.

TISHRIN goes on to say: Tension in southern Lebanon will remain due to the constant shelling of southern Lebanese villages, areas, and towns. Israel will surely be deluding itself if it believes, for a moment, that the solution lies in the use of force, or in acting upon these adventurous calls. This is because all events and developments over the years have shown that aggression is not the solution, nor will it ever be. As a matter of fact, aggression could create a fresh dilemma for Israel.

TISHRIN concludes by saying: The relevant UN resolutions provide for complete Israeli withdrawal from southern Lebanon. These resolutions, particularly UN Security Council Resolution 425, call for unconditional Israeli withdrawal from southern Lebanon. If it is anxious to establish peace in southern Lebanon, Israel has no choice but to comply with this resolution within the context of the peace process aimed at achieving just and comprehensive peace and the terms of reference agreed upon for the Madrid conference, which must produce a complete withdrawal from the Golan and southern Lebanon.

Under the headline "Lebanon's Sands Will Swallow Occupiers," the newspaper AL-THAWRAH discusses the situation in southern Lebanon and Israeli threats. The paper says that Israel is waging a war in southern Lebanon. It notes the statements made by the Israeli foreign minister and the Israeli northern region commander, asserting that their admissions are self-incriminating. Their statements show that Israeli soldiers are killed on Lebanese territory while conducting hostile assignments on Lebanese territory and against Lebanese citizens, whose full right to defend their territories, homeland, and lives, and to resist occupation is enshrined in international legitimacy.

AL-THAWRAH adds: Peres' government, which is aware of this, has continued to send its soldiers to their death to achieve its expansionist objectives and perpetuate its occupation. It is pursuing a terrorist course and a scorched-earth policy in southern Lebanon, just as other previous Israeli governments did.

AL-THAWRAH goes on to say: It goes without saying that Peres' government is in a real dilemma, for its pressures and constant aggression have failed to push Lebanon into a settlement that would perpetuate the occupation. It is feeling that the Lebanese sands will swallow its soldiers, along with agent militias, which are no longer trusted by the Israeli Government.

AL-THAWRAH concludes by saying: The policy of aggression will aggravate tension. It will not bring Israel security, nor will it remedy the crises in Israel, because this policy adversely and seriously affects the overall peace process.

The paper wonders: How far will Israel go in its efforts to destabilize the situation? Or will it learn from the lessons of the previous governments, which failed to bring Israel peace, and opt for the appropriate solution, which lies in withdrawal from southern Lebanon and the implementation of UN resolutions?

Syria: Envoy Says U.S. Sponsor 'Imposing New Priorities' on Region

JN2503083196 Paris Radio Monte Carlo in Arabic 0600 GMT 25 Mar 96

[Report from Washington by radio correspondent Hisham Milhim; passages within quotation marks recorded]

[FBIS Translated Text] Syria informed the United States that it will not participate in the antiterrorism conference emanating from Sharm al-Shaykh which will be held in Washington next Thursday [27 March] and Friday because the objective of that meeting is to ensure Israel's security at the expense of Arab security.

Asked whether he agrees with those who say that the Sharm al-Shaykh conference and its results are part of a campaign against the so-called fundamentalist Islamic trend in the region, Syrian Ambassador to Washington Walid al-Mu'allim told Radio Monte Carlo: "What do we see after Sharm al-Shaykh summit? We see that the peace process has become ambiguous at a time when the emphasis is only on fighting terrorism and violence without talk about the peace process. This means that the U.S. sponsor is imposing new priorities on the region that not only deviate from the principles of the Madrid conference but also harm the Arab interests."

With regard to the Syrian track of negtiations, and whether it is considered frozen, and the possibility of resuming negotiations with Israel in Maryland, Ambassador al-Mu'allim said: "The Syrian leadership considered the latest developments a deviation from the principles and framework of the Madrid peace conference. In light of the fact that this conference and its results are the only accepted term of reference for the peace process, it was necessary to call on the cosponsors of the peace process to resume the Madrid conference. We were not the party that suspended the talks, it was the Israeli side that did so, and we do not accept to return to the peace talks under preconditions."

The Syrian ambassador said what it is more important than the Israeli elections or the date for resuming the peace negotiations is whether there is a political decision in Israel to establish just and comprehensive peace that ensures the security of both parties in a just and equitable manner.

Syria: Press Questions Israel's Peace Intentions

JN2403131596 Damascus Syrian Arab Republic Radio Network in Arabic 0545 GMT 24 Mar 96

[Press review]

[FBIS Translated Text] The newspaper AL-BA'TH speaks in its commentary about the peace process and the Israeli regression. It notes that the peace process is once again facing a deadlock due to successive factors. It adds: The deadlock started to appear with the official announcement on early Israeli elections. Under this cover and pretext, Peres said he needs popular support for his policy.

AL-BA'TH notes: Syria accepted the ideas and assurances presented by the U.S. sponsor and asserted that the Israeli elections do not concern it. Syria's acceptance was aimed to provide a conducive atmosphere for the continuation of the peace process and peace efforts. The paper says: The fact that the Israeli side cut short the recent Maryland talks and failed to commit itself to a new date for resuming these talks emphasizes that Peres' government took a step backward on the road to peace and created a new problem called terrorism.

AL-BA'TH asserts: Terrorism is the antithesis of resistance. What Israel wants is to bury anything related to resistance under the debris of its occupation of the lands of others and its terrorist crimes against the legitimate owners of these lands.

Concluding its commentary, AL-BA'TH says: Syria's call for the cosponsors of Madrid conference to resume this conference is the proper framework for realizing a comprehensive and just settlement in the region. This call is based on international legitimacy. Sooner or later, this call should be heeded in order to firmly address all superficial matters which have nothing to do with the essence of the peace process.

AL-THAWRAH also speaks about the peace process. It says: It seems that peace is not in the calculations of Israel, which has been procrastinating for a long time and fabricated consecutive crises to bog down the peace process and hinder any real progress based on the foundations of peace, terms of reference represented in Madrid conference, and the basic principle of the U.S. initiative; namely, the land-for-peace equation.

In this respect, the paper says that the post-Sharm al-Shaykh meeting stage will reveal what Israel has in store for the peace process. Israel used procrastination, evasion, and circumvention to mire the accomplishment a just and comprehensive peace which is the real gateway for security and stability in the region.

AL-THAWRAH says: Those who care about peace do not demolish houses over the heads of their secure residents and turn the West Bank and Gaza Strip into a big prison under the umbrella of the limited self-rule authority.

The paper wonders: Does the policy of collective punishment adopted by Israel show its peaceful intentions? Is it with aggression that peace is built? Is it with starving and suppressing the Palestinian people the so-called coexistence, which Israel seeks, can be achieved?

The paper concludes it commentary by saying: Peace has requirements and foundations, which are very clear and well known to the cosponsors of the peace process. The cosponsors of the peace process are urged to move quickly in order to truly salvage the peace march through rehabilitating Madrid conference and its foundations and terms of reference. International legitimacy lies in the Security Council's resolutions and not in what Israel deems is appropriate for its policies. Currying favor with Israel will only further escalate tension and the cycle of violence and counterviolence and waste the opportunity of making peace.

In its commentary, TISHRIN addresses statements by the Israeli Likud leader in which he urges a large-scale military assault against national resistance in southern Lebanon. The paper says: This is one-upmanship. Instead of facing extremists with the facts of peace and peace requirements, loud and angry voices in the Labor Party make rash and irresponsible statements and vow further acts of aggression against the Lebanese people and their southern towns and villages.

TISHRIN says: The sole loser in the Israeli electoral campaign is the peace process and the painstaking efforts that were exerted over the past years to ensure its success. The paper notes: Since its inception, Israel adopted a policy of extremism, occupation, and expansion and staged many wars and acts of aggression. TISHRIN points out that the Israeli acts of aggression and threats failed to undermine the will of the Lebanese people and their determination to regain their land and establish the widest cooperation ties with Syria.

It maintains: Despite the iron fist and scorched earth policy, which the successive Israeli governments adopted, Lebanon's will was not in any way affected. The Lebanese people unanimously agreed on confronting the occupation and sticking to Security Resolution 425, which championed Lebanon and its rights and urged Israel to withdraw unconditionally. TISHRIN says: If resorting to force did not succeed in the past, it will not succeed neither today nor tomorrow. Israel's rulers should better respond to the genuine desire of Lebanon and Syria to achieve a just and comprehensive peace with a similar desire. They should better adhere to the foundations of Madrid conference and the essence of the international resolutions and engage in the real peace efforts away from any procrastination or delay.

Concluding, the paper says: Lebanon only seeks to regain its land. Syria only seeks to recover its land. The two countries have made great efforts to render the peace process a success and achieve tangible results. Israel alone placed obstacles and raised clumsy security pretexts to block peace requirements, particularly with regard to full withdrawal from the Golan and southern Lebanon.

Syria: Commentary Criticizes 'Hostile Conduct' by Israel

JN2403184496 Damascus Syrian Arab Republic Radio Network in Arabic 1240 GMT 24 Mar 96

[Station commentary]

[FBIS Translated Text] Israel continues to escalate the situation on more than one of the fronts that it opened after it acquired the necessary support from the Sharm al-Shaykh summit. Israel tightened the military siege on Palestinian towns, villages, and camps. It sent in forces and escalated its threats against occupied southern Lebanon, not to mention its policies of demolition, blowing up of houses, starving people, and the closures that are practiced by its forces day and night. This Israeli effort has been so organized and well-planned that the preceding events seem like they are a necessary preparation for the desired results, in harmony with the mentality of occupation and aggression. Its achievements were tested, and these tests seem to have proved the great success of this policy.

The self-rule authority was turned into a tool, and Israel redeployed its forces in the towns and villages from which it pretended to have withdrawn. It pushed its forces into southern Lebanon and exploited the will of several states to serve its interests. It used the U.S. Administration's efforts to wipe out any resistance and to settle scores on the pretext of combating terrorism, in addition to the gains it has made or will make.

In spite of all this, Israeli officials continue to talk about peace, coexistence, security, and stability. It is as if peace and the related concepts can materialize in such a manner and through such practices. Meanwhile the cracks are deepening; the gaps are widening, and the paradox [al-tanaqud] resulting from Israel's existence in the first place is further accentuated.

Regardless of Israel's hostile attitude toward the Arabs in general and regardless of Israel's history in the region, the repercussions of its existence, the effects and sins of this existence, and the manner and methods by which it has positioned itself — regardless of all this, by carrying out such escalations and through its old-new hostile conduct, Israel is not serving its own interests and is not providing the elements of security and stability for its future. It is not providing the most basic elements for the required coexistence.

Security, stability, coexistence, and other concepts do not materialize by implementing such polices. Rather, they materialize by realizing just, comprehensive, balanced [mawzun], equitable [mutaqafi'], and equal [mutasawi] peace. This, in turn, is not realized by making partial peace, by dealing with Arabs on an individual basis, or by concluding partial solutions with them. In the final analysis, the Arabs are all one front, and the Arab masses are one people who share common present and future interests in their land. What has been achieved at the expense of Arabs today, may not be achieved in the same way in the future or in a short while. A temporary solution cannot be a permanent one. Sustainable stability and peace is commensurate with the depth of this stability and from the comprehensiveness of this peace.

Will the Israelis realize the repercussions of the practices of escalation, Judaization, and threats, and of relying on its military machine rather than logic, reason, and the dialectics of life, which lead to an unavoidable fact: the restoration of rights and land and the establishment of peace, the most basic principle of which is securing its sustainability and viability on justice and equality?

Syria: Iraqi Opposition Representatives To Meet in Damascus 23 Mar

JN2303152396 Paris Radio Monte Carlo in Arabic 1200 GMT 23 Mar 96

[Report by Thana' al-Imam in Damascus]

[FBIS Translated Text] The representatives of the pan-Arab, Islamic, and Kurdish currents of the Iraqi opposition are due to hold a preparatory meeting in Damascus today to work out an agenda for a meeting, which is scheduled to be held in Damascus on 2 April. The meeting will be attended by 11 Iraqi opposition figures, including Talabani, leader of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan [PUK]; Nashirwan Idris Barzani, deputy leader of the Kurdistan Democratic Party; Muhammad Baqir al-Hakim, chairman of the Supreme Assembly of the Islamic Revolution in Iraq; Shaykh Muhammad al-Alusi, secretary general of the Islamic Block [al-kutlah al-islamiyah]; and other figures like Mahdi al-'Ubaydi of the Iraq Command of the Arab Socialist Ba'th Party.

SAIRI representative Bayan Jabr asserted to Paris Radio Monte Carlo that the planned 2 April meeting would prepare for an expanded meeting, which would include more than 40 Iraqi opposition figures. The [2 April] meeting will also set a date for the expanded meeting and name the figures who will attend. Dr. Fadil al-Ansari, member of the National Command of the Arab Socialist Ba'th Party, said the [preparatory] meeting was not aimed at replying to any foreign initiative, in reference to King Husayn's desire to hold an expanded meeting of the opposition. He asserted that the planned meetings were part of the gatherings, held in Syria by the Iraqi pan-Arab and Islamic currents. The Kurdish current will be added to the list of participants in the upcoming meetings.

Syria: World Urged To Defend International Legitimacy

JN2303160996 Damascus Syrian Arab Republic Radio Network in Arabic 1240 GMT 23 Mar 96

[Station commentary]

[FBIS Translated Text] Gentlemen: Because Israel is trying to obliterate the facts of peace and obstruct the achievement of a just and comprehensive peace, the call to resume the peace conference that convened in Madrid in 1991 is particularly important, not only so that the conference cosponsors — the United States and the Russian Federation — can familiarize themselves with the facts and the obstacles that prevent any progress, but so that they fulfill their role to prevent the collapse of the peace process and remove the Israeli obstacles that are placed on its path.

Israel, which is trying to shuffle cards and reverse the priorities of the equation of peace and security in the region, has not allowed any opportunity to establish a just and comprehensive peace that is based on the land-for-peace formula. Israel dictated its own rhythm on the peace process in order to evade the requirements of peace. It wasted a lot of time and effort in fruitless discussions and wrangles over vocabulary. It placed obstacles and raised secondary issues to serve its own interests without getting anywhere near the substance of the problem or the substance of the crystal-clear solution that agrees with the resolutions of international legitimacy.

Strangely, and despite all the strange things in Israel's behavior and conduct, Israel is deceiving itself by ignoring facts and by trying to blame Syria every time Israel's conduct puts the peace process at a real impasse, as the situation is now.

Every observer knows that the Israeli claims have always been object of ridicule. The entire world — at head of which the peace process cosponsors and especially the United States, which started the efforts and proposed the initiative and which has the most prominent role to play in the peace process — realize that the real obstacle before any genuine progress in the peace process lies in Israel's avoidance of implementing the resolutions of international legitimacy and its evasion of the land-for-peace formula.

Syria, which has been, and is still sincere in its dealings with the peace efforts, contributed on several occasions to overcome several traps and serious events, which were caused by Israel.

Syria, which considers the peace process a means to regain its territory and national and pan-Arab rights in accordance with international legitimacy and the U.S. initiative, cannot be against peace. It cannot work on obstructing the peace process or try to squander the historic opportunity, which can — if the just and comprehensive peace is achieved — make the region enter into a new phase, based on security and stability for all parties.

Undoubtedly, Israel, which is trying to impose a de facto peace by avoiding the basic condition of complete withdrawal from the Golan Heights, southern Lebanon, and the occupied Arab territories, is evading, maneuvering, and placing obstacles on the path of the peace process. That process is now standing at a very critical and serious juncture unless the peace conference cosponsors straighten the course of the peace process and make Israel stand on the correct path instead of making threats and creating tension. That correct path follows the standards of international legitimacy and its resolutions, and is in accordance with the Madrid conference terms of reference that were agreed upon by the entire world, which considered these terms of reference a historic opportunity to achieve peace in the region.

The world community, and despite all of Israel's propaganda distortion attempts, is required more than ever before to confirm its credibility in defense of international legitimacy and its resolutions. It is required to make Israel yield to the will of peace. This requires a sincere and deep consideration of the peace process and the reasons for its stumbling before one can speak about rescuing peace.

Afghanistan

Afghanistan: Talks Between Hezb-e Eslami, Government 'Suspended'

LD2203163396 (Clandestine) Radio Message of Freedom in Pashto
to Afghanistan 0730 GMT 22 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] In an interview with the WAHDAT newspaper, Professor Qariborrahman Sa'ed, head of Hezb-e Eslami's guidance and culture, said: The Hezb's talks with the Kabul administration have now been suspended.

Sa'ed said that talks are still going on between the Coordination Council, under the chairmanship of Hazrat Sebghatollah Mojaddidi, and the Kabul administration. The rumors which were spread in this respect were totally baseless. [sentence as heard]

Sa'ed added: The idea is to open a channel of understanding through which the Kabul administration, the Taleban group, the Coordination Council, and other neutral formations can take part. Thus, the road can be paved for the jehadi leaders' meeting to be held in Nangarhar or in any of the eastern provinces.

He said that the Kabul administration realized that it could not govern single handedly. [passage indistinct]

We have held talks with the Kabul administration within the framework of the norms and principles of the Coordination Council.

Afghanistan: Opposition Radio Says Government 'Ready To Launch Attack'

LD2203191896 (Clandestine) Radio Message of Freedom in Pashto
to Afghanistan 0730 GMT 22 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] The Kabul administration has accelerated military movements around the city. Soldiers along the front lines have been put in a state of alert and are ready to launch an attack. According to reports, the people in Kabul since last week have been talking about a possible fresh attack. The question is: who will launch the attack first? Will it be the forces of the Kabul administration or the Taleban forces?

In a news conference held last week, [President] Borhanoddin Rabbani, head of the Kabul administration, emphasized that his forces were in a defensive position and added that they would not launch an attack.

Afghanistan: Rabbani—Talks With Islamic Party 'Proceeding Successfully'

LD2303221696 (Clandestine) Radio Message of Freedom in Pashto
to Afghanistan 0730 GMT 23 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] In an interview with the AL-HAYAT newspaper, printed in Egypt, Professor Rabbani said yesterday: Our talks with Hezb-e Eslami [Islamic Party led by Hekmatyar] are proceeeding successfully, and the results of these talks will be announced soon.

Rabbani added: Our agreement and understanding with the Hezb-e Eslami of Afghanistan will become a foundation for peace with other belligerent groups and may lead to a resolution that can be acceptable to all relevant sides.

He said: We are not seeking the formation of a front to oppose other groups. However, we ask all groups to take part in talks with us, so that conspiracies against jihad and national unity can be foiled, and peace and security can be restored in Afghanistan.

Afghanistan: Taleban Rockets Kill 1, Wound 4

LD2203183396 Kabul Radio Afghanistan Network in Pashto 1530 GMT 22 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] By firing (?five) rockets, the Taleban group has martyred one person and wounded another four citizens of Kabul city.

BAKHTAR reported that today the residential areas of the city were again the target of rocket attacks by the Taleban group. Several residential houses also sustained damage.

The exchange of fire continued last night and today. The artillery units were responding to the rocket attacks by Benazir Bhutto's Taleban.

The report says that, in several sorties, the air force bombarded the enemy positions in the south of Kabul.

Afghanistan: 5 Taleban Members Killed in Clash in Nimroz

LD2203193696 (Clandestine) Radio Message of Freedom in Pashto
to Afghanistan 0730 GMT 22 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] According to news agencies, in the course of a clash which took place between the supporters of Kabul's administration and a group of Taleban patrolmen around Nimroz Province, five Taleban members were killed and another two were wounded.

The agencies say that a group of Taleban who were on patrol in (?Khoshgowah) area, Nimroz Province, were confronted by a group of the Kabul administration's supporters who had been lying in wait. As a result of their attack, five of the Taleban group were killed and another two were injured.

Afghanistan: Opposition Reportedly Operating Forced Labor Gangs

LD2303161196 (Clandestine) Radio Message of Freedom in Pashto to Afghanistan 0730 GMT 23 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] The Taleban has started "voluntary" work for the first time since Najib's communist regime was toppled.

An eyewitness, who has recently returned from Chahar Asiab [10 miles south of Kabul city], told a Radio Message of Freedom correspondent that the Taleban group has embarked on press-ganging the people and forcibly borrowing the local people's vehicles in Logar Province, Maydanshar and in other areas under their control. They force each household to give up one person to do hard labor.

The report adds that a few days ago the Taleban group press-ganged all the people in Logar and Chahar Asiab and forced them to work on the Kabul-Logar road.

The eyewitness added: This group, in addition to forcing people to work on the roads, makes them do other heavy work such as loading and unloading weapons from vehicles. The Taleban, instead of taking toll money along the road, forces the people to give Ushur [one tenth of income to be paid each year as a religious duty by every Muslim]. The people in every province controlled by the Taleban group, are now facing economic difficulties and food shortages.

Afghanistan: Air Attacks Kill 40 Taleban Members

LD2303175596 Kabul Radio Afghanistan Network in Pashto 1530 GMT 23 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Twenty so-called Taleban men were killed yesterday in the Chahar Asiab training center, and one of their tanks operating in the area was also destroyed.

BAKHTAR reported that as a result of yesterday's aerial bombardment of Taleban fortifications in the Chahar Asiab training center and in Kish Khvor, the Taleban sustained heavy loss of life and material. As a result of the aerial bombardment, 40 of the Taleban's men were killed and another 20 of them were wounded. [words indistinct]

The air force bombardment was in response to Taleban rocket attacks that have been continuing for the last [word indistinct] weeks.

According to another report, the Taleban group fired rockets on residential regions of Kabul city both last night and today. Seven people were injured and a number of houses sustained damage during these attacks.

Afghanistan: Artillery Attack Kills 18, Injures 16 in Kabul

BK2403093096 Hong Kong AFP in English 0916 GMT 24 Mar 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] KABUL, March 24 (AFP) — At least 18 civilians were killed and 16 injured when an artillery shell hit a busy street in the centre of the besieged Afghan capital Kabul on Sunday [24 March], doctors and witnesses said.

The attack, the deadliest in this embattled city in nearly three months, was launched by the Taleban militia encamped around Kabul's southern suburbs, defence officials said.

A single round struck the road next to a packed commuter bus in the Sharinow shopping area at lunchtime, killing six people instantly and fatally wounding 10 others, they said.

"I was looking through the window of my shop watching pedestrians passing by and wood salesmen peddling their wares when it struck," tailor Mohammed Zaher, told AFP.

"Suddenly there was a crashing noise and my windows came in. When I looked out again I saw piles of bodies lying in pools of blood on the street," he said.

"Some had arms missing, some had lost their legs and other were screaming for help. It was like a scene from hell," the shaken 40-year-old said.

Ten of the victims, which included two children and two women, died on their way to the city's hospitals or after being admitted for emergency surgery.

A further 16 people were wounded, many of them seriously, hospital staff said.

The barrage of five shells hit several areas of the city, but four of them caused no casualties, locals said.

It was the most deadly attack since a salvo of rockets killed 21 people in one of Kabul's southern suburbs on January 2.

No independent confirmation of who was responsible for the attack could be immediately obtained here.

Afghanistan: Government Forces Attack Taleban Positions Around Kabul

LD2403150896 Kabul Radio Afghanistan Network in Dari 1430 GMT 24 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Eight pseudo-Taleban were recently killed when the [words indistinct] of the Islamic [words indistinct].

Reports reaching the Bakhtar Information Agency say that by firing accurately on the gathering places of the Taleban, army artillery units have killed eight and injured 12 of the Taleban in the [word indistinct] in Chahar Asiab region [south of Kabul]. An enemy BM-12 system was also destroyed.

Bangladesh

Bangladesh: BNP Asks Awami League To Help Resolve Political Crisis

BK2503032696 Dhaka Radio Bangladesh Network in Bengali 0100 GMT 22 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] The Secretary General of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party Barrister Abdus Salam Talukdar has called on Awami League leaders to give their cooperation to government's constitutional initiatives to resolve the political crisis in the greater interest of the country. In a statement issued in Dhaka yesterday, he said the current noncooperation movement cannot be termed as a political one as its aim is to destroy the national economy.

A meeting in Dhaka yesterday reviewed the overall law and order situation. Presiding, the Home Minister Khondaker Mosharraf Hussain, called on concerned officials to face the situation with patience and tolerance, and to normalize the law and order situation. Mosharraf Hussain said normal law and order should be maintained in the country to ensure security to life and property, social peace, and economic prosperity. He appealed to all concerned to extend all possible cooperation in this area. The meeting also discussed current projects under the Ministry of Home.

Army personnel have taken positions at important institutions in different parts of Dhaka and Chittagong. Official sources said they have also been deployed along the Dhaka-Chittagong highway and railway line so that normal communications between the capital and the port city, which is vital to the economy, can be restored. In cooperation with the local people, an Army patrol averted attempts to disrupt rail links between Dhaka and Chittagong. Members of the Army also helped railway employees to repair tracks between Feni and Gunabati, which was damaged by a group of unruly people early yesterday morning.

Meanwhile, eight persons have been arrested from Sher Shah Colony in Chittagong and 20 bombs and molotov cocktails seized from them. Another five were arrested in the Nandankanan area of Chittagong on charges of hurling bombs. Army personnel received spontaneous support and cooperation from the local people during these operations.

Bangladesh: Security Forces Raid Opposition Strongholds in Chittagong

BK2303165496 Hong Kong AFP in English 1649 GMT 23 Mar 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Chittagong, Bangladesh, March 23 (AFP) — A huge contingent of Bangladeshi security forces late Saturday raided opposition strongholds in this southeastern port city, police and witnesses said.

A combined force from the army, paramilitary Bangladesh Rifles and police raided at least 10 areas and detained some 50 suspected opposition activists, police said.

Other opposition supporters responded to the raids, which they claimed were done without warrants, with widespread bomb attacks but there were no reports of casualties.

A half-day general strike has also been called to protest the raids.

The government earlier Saturday authorised Chittagong port authorities to start immediate talks to keep shipping and cargo handling facilities operational with opposition activists who have threatened to shut down all business.

"The government has given written authority to start talks with the opposition," port authority chairman Capitain Zahiruddin Mahmud told AFP.

The development comes after Energy Minister Oli Ahmed and State Minister for Shipping Shahjahan Siraj failed to start normal operations at the port.

International shippers have given the port authorities until Monday to start unloading some 53 ships stranded offshore since the opposition's "non-cooperation" campaign started March 9.

The opposition wants the resignation of Prime Minister Khaleda Zia and an annulment of parliamentary polls conducted February 15 which it boycotted. They also want all future elections to be organised under a neutral caretaker administration.

India

India: Muslim Rebels Reportedly Seize Kashmir's Holiest Shrine

BK2403120196 Hong Kong AFP in English 1151 GMT 24 Mar 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] SRINAGAR, India, March 24 (AFP) — Heavily-armed Muslim separatists seized control of Kashmir's holiest Islamic shrine Sunday [24 March] after a firefight with Indian soldiers left three dead at the sacred complex, witnesses here said.

At least 30 gunmen of the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) militant organisation stormed into the Hazratbal shrine in Srinagar's Nagin Lake suburb after the gunbattle left two policemen and a rebel dead earlier Sunday.

Witnesses said the guerrilla group was led by Basharat Raza, a senior fighter of a faction of the splintered JKLF, and added that Indian soldiers have brought in reinforcements to the lakeside shrine.

The police authorities, however, refused to confirm reports that the ancient shrine has been seized by the militants saying Indian troops were still in control of Hazratbal.

"At noon (Sunday) JKLF militants attempted to force their entry with weapons into Hazratbal shrine," Kashmir's Inspector General of Police P.S. Gill said.

"Armed police personnel guarding the premises stopped them and in the ensuing altercation one of the JKLF militants was killed and some others injured.

"One sub-inspector and three constables were also injured and the sub-inspector and one of the constables later died of their wounds," Gill said but denied reports of the JKLF takeover of Hazratbal.

Muslim militants earlier Sunday took position at makeshift bunkers and houses near Hazratbal vowing to fight to the last man to prevent Indian troops from entering the complex, witnesses said from near the complex .

They said the exchange of fire began at noon (0630 GMT) and added the fierce gunbattle continued for some time at Hazratbal, about nine kilometres [word indistinct] miles) from Srinagar.

One resident said the Hazratbal chief priest was heard making appeals for an ambulance to be allowed inside the complex saying there were casualties inside the mosque which Kashmiri Muslims believe houses a hair of Prophet Mohammed.

The residents said the JKLF splinter faction leader Raza later entered the shrine with guns and ammunition. Raza took over houses around Hazratbal on September 29 to foil a bid by renegade rebel chief Kuka Parray to enter the shrine and address a Friday congregation.

The rebel leader, who was reportedly injured in Sunday's fight, has vowed to "fight to the finish" any attempt by troops to take over Hazratbal which witnessed a 34-day army siege in October 1993 after guerrillas took the shrine.

Tensions spiralled, meanwhile, in this Kashmir summer capital following the firefight at Hazratbal, witnesses said and added that shops and businesses shut down as a precaution in the picturesque city.

Srinagar is the urban hub of the Muslim separatist campaign which, since 1989, has left more than 12,000 people dead in Kashmir, India's only Muslim majority state.

India accuses Pakistan of fuelling insurgency in Kashmir. Islamabad denies the allegation but extends moral and diplomatic support to what it describes as the Kashmiris' just struggle for self-determination.

The two South Asian arch-rivals have fought two of their three wars since the subcontinent's partition in 1947 from British colonial rule over the divided Himalayan state.

India administers the southern two-thirds of Kashmir. Pakistan controls the mountainous and mostly Punjabi-speaking northern tip of the strife-torn province.

India: PTV Reports Developments at Kashmir Shrine

BK2403144696 Islamabad PTV Television Network in English 1300 GMT 24 Mar 96

[FBIS Transcribed Excerpt] Reports from occupied Kashmir speak of heavy shooting between Indian security forces and freedom fighters at the Hazratbal shrine in Srinagar. BBC television, quoting police sources, reports three people have so far been killed in the shooting, which was continuing outside Hazratbal mosque when last reports came in. However, Kashmiri sources say the death toll could be 12, which also includes two personnel of the Indian security forces. According to eye witnesses the Kashmiri freedom fighters have taken positions near the Hazratbal mosque to stop Indian troops from entering the complex, where a curfew has been imposed.

Reports reaching Muzaffarabad from across the Line of Control say Basharat Sheikh, a commander of the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front, was among those killed in the shooting. PTV Correspondent M.Z. Sohail, after contacting a Kashmiri journalist, says the situation can take a very serious turn if the Indian security forces tried to desecrate the shrine again, as it is a source of great spiritual inspiration for the Muslims of the valley. [passage omitted]

In their continuing acts of genocide, Indian troops killed three Kashmiri teachers in a raid in Islamabad-Anantnag. In another development, residents of about a dozen villages in Pulwama area have started migrating because of the inhumane repressive actions by troops. In their retaliatory strikes, mujahidin attacked military posts and camps in five localities of Srinagar inflicting heavy losses on them. In Jammu area, a military patrol was attacked by mujahidin killing and injuring a number of troops. Two mujahidin were martyred.

India: Kashmir Government To Maintain Sanctity of Muslim Shrine

BK2503041296 Delhi All India Radio Network in English 0245 GMT 25 Mar 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] The Jammu and Kashmir government has reiterated its determination not to allow anyone to enter the holy shrine of Hazratbal in Srinagar with arms. An official spokesman appealed to the people to cooperate with the authorities in maintaining the sanctity of the shrine.

As reported, an exchange of fire took place between the militants and the state police guarding the shrine. The incident occurred when the police tried to prevent some militants belonging to the JKLF [Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front]-Siddiqui group from entering the shrine with arms. According to official sources, one militant and a police personnel were killed in the incident. Four policemen were also injured. Senior civil and police officials are closely watching the situation.

India: Muslim Rebels Remain in Control of Kashmir's Holiest Mosque

BK2503073596 Hong Kong AFP in English 0706 GMT 25 Mar 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Srinagar, India, March 25 (AFP) — Muslim guerrillas remained in control Monday [25 March] of Kashmir's holiest mosque here defying government calls to surrender, a day after a bloody shootout with police left up to 11 people dead.

About 20 heavily-armed militants were inside the Hazratbal mosque on the outskirts of Srinagar, where authorities clamped a curfew and mounted a siege of the shrine in a bid to flush out the gunmen.

Police with loud-hailers urged the militants to come out of the imposing lakeside Hazratbal mosque, which houses a hair which Muslims in Kashmir believe comes from the beard of Prophet Mohammad.

"We are trying to flush them out," a senior police officer told AFP.

The gunmen are from a splinter group of the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF).

JKLF leader Shabir Siddiqui said heavy fighting erupted Sunday when Kashmiri police commandos raided his office near the mosque and opened fire. He said his men then moved into the mosque.

He said nine JKLF members, including its military commander Basharat Raza, were killed. Police sources admitted to only eight deaths, including those of a police sub-inspector and a constable. Three policemen were injured.

The intermittent fighting, which reportedly lasted seven hours, came as Indian Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao vowed to hold elections in the state's six parliament seats in May despite sabotage threats by militants.

He also blamed Pakistan, which disputes Kashmir's ownership, for the continuing separatist drive in the Himalayan province which has left more than 12,000 people dead since 1989.

Kashmir's director general of police M.N. Sabharwal on Monday flew into Srinagar from the state's winter capital Jammu to supervise the mosque's siege, and later launched efforts to defuse the crisis.

Police sources said Sabharwal had contacted the Hazratbal's chief priest, Mufti Bashruddin Farooqi, as well an uncle of the slain militant Raza and asked them to mediate.

There was no fighting Monday, but the whole of Srinagar, the summer capital of Kashmir, was tense. About 2,000 police as well as members of the paramilitary Border Security Force (BSF) ringed the shrine.

"The curfew will be in force indefintely," a police officer said. "Nobody will be allowed to approach the mosque. We want (those inside) to give up their weapons and surrender ... We have laid siege to Hazratbal."

A police officer said only one body had been recovered from the site and the rest were still sprawled inside the marble mosque.

Dozens of angry Muslims took to the streets at two places in this city shouting anti-India slogans to protest the shootout and the siege, but security forces dispersed them with tear gas and batons, witnesses said.

The Indian Army laid a month-long siege to the Hazratbal after it was similarly taken over by dozens of gunmen in 1993. It ended when the gunmen surrendered.

The JKLF is the premier Muslim militant group fighting to end Indian rule in Kashmir. It split last year, and Siddiqui's group is controlled by the Pakistan-based Amanullah Khan.

Siddiqui's JKLF has had an office in a house adjoining the Hazratbal mosque. In the past its gunmen have posed for photographs near the shrine with a huge arsenal of arms and ammunition.

They have also fought gunbattles near the shrine with members of a Kashmiri renegade group led by Kuka Parray for the control of the shrine.

India and Pakistan have fought two wars over the picturesque province. New Delhi accuses Islamabad of arming and training the separatists. Pakistan denies the charge.

India: Kashmir Shrine Situation Updated; Pakistani Firing Reported

BK2503085896 Delhi All India Radio Network in English 0830 GMT 25 Mar 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] In Srinagar, curfew has been imposed in the area around the Hazratbal shrine from this morning. Efforts are on to recover the bodies of those killed in yesterday's exchange of fire between the J and K [Jammu and Kashmir] Police guarding the shrine and a group of militants. The number of dead is unofficially put at nine, which includes one policeman. Four policemen were injured. The governor's adviser, Mr. D.D. Saklani, and DG [director general] of police, Mr. M.M. Sabharwal, visited the site today. Senior civil and police officials are camping there. As already reported, the incident took place when the J and K police tried to prevent the entry of a group of armed militants into the shrine. The authorities have appealed to the people to cooperate in maintaining the sanctity of the shrine.

Pakistani troops resorted to unprovoked firing toward the Indian villages in Ranbirsinghpura and Samba sectors in Jammu and Kashmir last night. The firing started around 2000 in the evening and continued intermittently till 0500 this morning. There was no loss of life or casualty on the Indian side.

India: Communist Party-Marxist Releases Election Manifesto

BK2203162296 Delhi All India Radio Network in English 1530 GMT 22 Mar 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] The reversal of economic policies of the government, strengthening of secularism, fighting separatism, and elimination of nexus between the criminals and politicians will be the main plank of the CPI-M [Communist Party of India-Marxist] in the ensuing general elections. Releasing the manifesto in New Delhi today, the party general secretary, Mr. Harkishen Singh Surjeet, said that his party will stop privatization and curb price rises. Criticizing the Congress-I for allegedly compromising on secularism and the BJP [Bharatiya Janata Party] for the demolition of the Babri Masjid [mosque], the manifesto says that the party will bring a bill to separate religion from politics. It has also promised to transfer all cases connected with the Ayodhya dispute to the Supreme Court under Article 138-2 for a speedy verdict which will be binding on all sides. The party also proposes to restructure center-state relations with more powers to states. On Kashmir, the party says it will provide maximum autonomy to the state within the framework of the Indian Constitution. On agrarian sector, the party has promised implementation of land reforms by plugging loopholes in the existing law. The party also promised to give no licenses for deep sea fishing to foreign companies and joint ventures. On social justice, the party has supported reservation [of government jobs] to the converted scheduled castes [socially backward class people]. It has also promised to provide one third of the seats in legislature and parliament for women. On foreign policy, the party says it will resist attempts of the Western countries to impose their version of Nonproliferation Treaty and Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty.

Later, talking to newsmen, Mr. Surjeet said the third alternative of the less secular and democratic parties at the national level will be formulated within the next few days.

India: Central Team Meets 3 Militant Leaders in Kashmir

BK2303112296 Delhi All India Radio Network in English 0830 GMT 23 Mar 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] The three-member central team now on a visit to Jammu and Kashmir held discussions with three militant leaders in Srinagar today. The militant leaders — Mr. Ghulam Mohiuddin Lone, Mr. Abu Adeed, and Mr. G.R. Chaman — participated in the discussions. The discussions are in continuation of the talks held with these leaders by the home minister, Mr. S.B. Chavan, last week in New Delhi. AIR Srinagar correspondent reports that the central team headed by the special secretary in the union Home Ministry, Mr. V.K. Jain, is scheduled to meet some more militant leaders before returning to the capital. Talking to our correspondent, Mr. Jain said the talks were held in a frank and cordial atmosphere and each side appreciated the other's point of view. He expressed confidence over the progress of the talks and said that things will improve very soon. The three-member central committee was set up to follow the process of dialogue with the Kashmiri militants to help restore peace and normalcy in the state.

India: Kashmir 'Militant' Party in Favor of Elections

BK2303135096 Delhi All India Radio Network in English 1230 GMT 23 Mar 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] In Jammu and Kashmir, the militant outfit, Ikhwanul Muslimeen, says democractic process and elections are the only solutions to the tangle in the valley. Addressing a news conference in Jammu today, the leader of the group, Mr. Kuka Parre, said that the people of the state should be allowed to cast their votes in favor of the candidates of their choice. He said his group will not allow pro-Pakistan militant groups to terrorize people and force them to boycott polling in the coming Lok Sabha elections.

India: Kashmiri Leaders 'Once Again' Reject Kashmir Election Plans

BK2403153796 Islamabad PTV Television Network in English 1300 GMT 24 Mar 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] The All Parties Hurriyat Conference leaders have categorically rejected the Indian plan to hold elections in occupied Kashmir on 21st May.

PTV special correspondent Ghulam Nabi Khayal reports from New Delhi:

[Begin Khayal recording] The All Parties Hurriyat Conference has once again pledged that people of Kashmir shall not participate in proposed elections in Jammu and Kashmir state, and they shall boycott these elections under all circumstances. This was stated by the conference chairman, Mirwaiz Omar Farooq, after his meeting with Riaz Hussain Khokhar, the Pakistani high commissioner in India, here in New Delhi Saturday night. The meeting took place after the Hurriyat leaders participated in a reception in connection with the Pakistan Day celebrations. Other Hurriyat leaders who attended the meeting included Syed Ali Shah Gilani and Abdul Ghani Lone.

Mr. Khokhar also assured the Hurriyat leaders that Islamabad and the people of Pakistan shall continue with their supporting of the Kashmiri people on moral, political, and diplomatic fronts, enabling them to secure their right of self-determination in accordance with the United Nations resolutions. The Hurriyat leaders expressed grave concern over increasing human rights violations being committed by the Indian forces against people of Kashmir and emphasized that Pakistan needs to be more active on diplomatic level to expose these unabated atrocities before the entire world.

Ghulam Nabi Khayal, PTV News, New Delhi. [end recording]

India: Rao Urges Pakistan Not To Disrupt Elections in Kashmir

BK2503020596 Delhi All India Radio Network in English 1530 GMT 24 Mar 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] The Congress-I president says no force would be allowed to disrupt the poll process in Jammu and Kashmir. Addressing a public meeting in Delhi today, Mr. Narasimha Rao urged Pakistan to desist from such attempts. He said that special arrangements will be made to ensure a peaceful, free, and fair poll in the state.

Referring to the recent Supreme Court judgment on Hindutwa [Hinduism], Mr. Narasimha Rao appealed to political parties to refrain from making religion or caste a poll plank. He said that as a result of the economic reforms initiated by his government, the country has regained its credibility in the international community, in addition to reviving the economy.

India: Bahujan Samaj Party Rules Out Alliance With Janata Dal

BK2503042696 Delhi All India Radio Network in English 0245 GMT 25 Mar 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] The Bahujan Samaj Party [BSP] has ruled out any alliance with the Janata Dal [JD] anywhere in the country for the coming Lok Sabha elections. Talking to newspersons at Fatehpur in Uttar Pradesh, the party general secretary, Ms. Mayawati, described reports about the possibility of a BSP-JD alliance as baseless. She said her party will contest at least 200 seats in the coming Lok Sabha elections, including all the 85 from Uttar Pradesh.

India: BJP Decides To Forge Alliance With Regional Parties

BK2503075396 Delhi Doordarshan Television Network in English 1530 GMT 24 Mar 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] The Central Election Committee of the Bharatiya Janata Party [BJP] has reached a broad consensus on alliances with various regional parties. The party has decided to go it alone at the national level. More details from our correspondent, Atal Tiwari:

[Begin recording] [Correspondent Tiwari] (?Leaders) of the party started arriving one after another for the crucial meeting of the Central Election Committee. The two-day meeting will be discussing the party's strategy for the election, the (?poll) alliances, and the list of candidates for the coming elections. Party President Mr. Lal Krishna Advani chaired the meeting which was attended among others by Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, and Dr. Murli Manohar Joshi. Later at a press conference in the capital, Mr. L.K. Advani declared that BJP would not have any electoral alliances with any political party at the national level. The state units, however, have been asked to recommend alliances with the regional parties.

[L.K. Advani] Because we do not propose to have any alliance on the national level. But when some states, state units, want to have adjustments and may feel that it would be to the advantage of the party, they can certainly explore possibilities and report to us.

[Tiwari] The party would release its first list of candidates for the Lok Sabha elections before 27 March, the date of notification of elections. The second list of candidates will be finalized after the Central Election Committee meet again on Friday and Saturday. Hopefully, by that time BJP will fine-tune its strategy. [end recording]

India: Political Parties To Boycott Polls in Arunachal Pradesh

BK2503082096 Delhi Doordarshan Television Network in English 1530 GMT 24 Mar 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Political parties in Arunachal Pradesh have unanimously decided to boycott the coming parliamentary elections over the alleged dull response of the center to the Chakma [tribal refugees from Bangladesh] refugee issue. The decision was taken at a two-day all party meeting which concluded in Itanagar today.

India: Janata Dal, SP Alliance To Contest Uttar Pradesh Election

BK2503093696 Delhi All India Radio Network in English 0830 GMT 25 Mar 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] The Janata Dal will have an alliance with the Samajwadi Party [SP] for the coming Lok Sabha elections in Uttar Pradesh. This was announced by the leaders of the two parties in New Delhi today. At a meeting between the Janata Dal president, Mr. Lalu Prasad Yadav, and the Samajwadi Party president, Mr. Mulayam Singh Yadav, it was decided that the two parties will complete detailed constituency-wise discussions on seat sharing by Wednesday. Several other Janata Dal leaders, including Mr. S.R. Bommai and H.D. Devegowda, also attended the meeting. A small group of leaders from both parties will decide the details of seat sharing. While the Janata Dal will be represented by Mr. S.R. Bommai, Mr. Ramvilas Paswan, Mufti Mohammad Sayeed, and Mr. Sharad Yadav, the SP team will comprise Mr. Gyaneshwar Mishra, Mr. Ramgopal Yadav, and Mr. Kirin Moinanda.

India: 'Significant Maneuver' on Satellite Completed

BK2303094196 Delhi All India Radio Network in English 0245 GMT 23 Mar 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Another significant maneuver on board the Indian Remote Sensing Satellite — IRS-P3 — has been successfully completed. The wide field sensors were switched on yesterday following a command issued from the control center of Indian Space Research Organization. The payload has an additional shortwave infrared band which can provide more data for crop condition assessment. Besides, it is also useful for assessing snow, cloud cover, flood damage, and geology. Another payload modular optoelectronic scanner will be switched on today and the X-ray astronomy payload in two weeks.

India: Performance of Satellite, German Scanner Updated

BK2403124596 Delhi Doordarshan Television Network in English 1530 GMT 23 Mar 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] The first pictures from the German scanner on board the Indian Remote Sensing satellite — IRS P-3 — were received at the SHAR [Sriharikota Satellite Launch Range] Nagar earth station in Andhra Pradesh today. With this, the Indo-German cooperation in ocean studies has begun. Our Hyderabad correspondent, E. Krishna Rao, reports.

[Begin recording] [Rao] This morning, the Indian Remote Sensing satellite — IRS P-3 — began sending the pictures of the west coast near Gujarat. The Indo-German scientists are jubilant. IRS P-3, which is in polar orbit, provides valuable data on ocean studies and vegetation once in 101 minutes in 14 orbits during the day.

Here is National Remote Sensing Agency director, Dr. Dixitulu.

[Dixitulu] Well, we have seen that the all sensor systems have worked well. We got the data. We got the calibration data and the image data, and it is for us to process and do the analysis for the ocean parameters and for the color like chlorophyll and other related parameters (?arranging) out of the (?moss). So far as this data is concerned, it is mainly for the vegetation, for agricultural applications.

[Rao] Germany is keen to have many more such tie ups with this success, says Mr. (Neumann) from German Space Agency, DLR:

[(Neumann)] Here, we will do all the [word indistinct] jointly with our Indian colleagues' investigations on the [words indistinct] all over the years or several years of the ocean's development, investigations on evolution, and things in this direction.

[Rao] The first pictures from white field camera over Gulf of Kutch and west coast were released today. The IRS P-3 was successfully placed in orbit on Thursday by PSLV [Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle] launched from Sriharikota range. The X-ray astronomy payload is expected to be on in about two weeks time, and the satellite will be fully operational in three weeks.

E. Krishna Rao, in SHAR Nagar earth station, for Doordarshan news. [end recording]

India: Rao Supports Continuation of Space Program

BK2303140596 Delhi All India Radio Network in English 1230 GMT 23 Mar 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] The prime minister has said that the Indian space program will not be allowed to suffer because of lack of funds. Mr. Narasimha Rao stated this when members of the PSLV [Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle] team called on him in New Delhi today. He described the successful PSLV program as the country's showpiece to the world. Congratulating every member of the team, the prime minister said that the program of such a magnitude boosts the morale of the nation.

Iran

Iran: Khamene'i Addresses Current Issues in Mashhad

LD2303175196 Tehran IRIB Television First Program Network in Persian 1430 GMT 23 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] His Eminence Ayatollah ['Ali] Khamene'i, the eminent leader of the Islamic revolution, delivered a speech this evening to a gathering of tens of thousands of the residents of Mashhad and pilgrims to the blessed shrine of the eighth Imam, his holiness Imam Reza, peace be upon him, who had gathered there in the Imam Khomeyni Courtyard and in other courtyards around the blessed shrine.

He said: The Muslim nation of Iran is a great, faithful, and undefeatable nation and, as long as it maintains unity of expression and faith in God, no power can gain victory over it.

The eminent leader referred to the fact that the Iranian nation, by virtue of its great interest in Islamic issues, was the only nation which had adjusted and set both its lunar calendar and its solar calendar to the Prophet's Hegira [flight from Mecca to Medina], and said: The beginning of the New Year is a good opportunity for every individual and every nation to reflect on their performance during the past year and to assess the positive and negative points of their activities by thinking about and examining their actions and feelings.

His Eminence Ayatollah Khamene'i described the year that has just ended as a year that was brimming with constructive work by the great Iranian nation and said: Truly, a great movement has been initiated in the country, and if we assess the results, even in comparison with developed countries, it becomes clear that the Islamic Republic has brought about a pride-inspiring period for the Iranian nation.

The eminent leader referred to the extensive propaganda of the enemies of the Islamic revolution and added: This propaganda bears no fruit for the enemy other than failure, because, when a nation comes to understand itself and its path, and when it pursues its aims with a strong will, the efforts of its enemies will, contrary to their belief, only strengthen its will, make its faith more powerful, and consequently make its future even brighter.

The eminent leader of the revolution also spoke of the need for separating the country's economy from oil revenue and said: Iran is a powerful country from the point of view of natural resources and ways of generating wealth and it is necessary to move, in a planned way, towards totally halting oil exports.

His Eminence Ayatollah Khamene'i described unity and solidarity as the secret to the steadfastness and pride of the Muslim nation of Iran during the past 17 years and stressed: Everyone, in their remarks in election campaigns, in the Majles and outside it, as well as everywhere else, must refrain from saying anything which would give people a sense of splits or divisions, because unity and solidarity are more important than anything else for the people.

On international issues, the eminent leader said: The main task of the Islamic system in the world arena is international cooperation and joint efforts with governments and nations. Of course, we also have an emergency task in the world arena and that is confronting the enemies of the Islamic nation and system.

The eminent leader of the Islamic revolution stressed: Our main battle in the world is with the main enemy of Islam, the Islamic system, and the Iranian nation, that is, with Zionism and arrogance. Today, the main arrogant one in the world is the aggressor, lawless and bullying government of the United States, which, like a highway robber, uses violence, force and blood-letting to pursue nothing but its own interests. Of course, the Zionist regime is even more evil than the American nation [as heard; at the end of the 1430 GMT newscast, the announcer apologized for his "mistake" and corrected the phrase "more evil than the American nation" to "more evil than the American Government."] From the first, it came into existence with cruelty, murder, lies, tricks, and the displacement of the Palestinian nation and has, since then, made suppression, murder, pillage, aggression, and the violation of the rights of the Palestinian nation the basis for its survival and continuing existence.

Israel came into being on the basis of terrorism and today, too, the most dangerous and vicious terrorists of the world are the people who are in power in the usurped country of Palestine. His Eminence Ayatollah Khamene'i added: We know that the main reason for the United States' enmity and vengefulness against Islamic Iran is the support of the Muslim nation of Iran for the rights of the Palestinian nation. However, we will not overlook historical facts and realities and we will not sign the death sentence of the wronged nation of Palestine.

His Eminence Ayatollah Khamene'i explained: Today, the list of the foreign enemies we are confronting in the main is headed by the corrupt, usurping, evil and terrorist regime ruling over occupied Palestine. Behind it, is the regime of the United States of America. Of course, there are other problems in this or that corner, which are of less importance, such as the recent incident regarding the German judiciary — which was an ugly and hateful act aimed at pleasing the Zionists. Of course, the German Government says it does not have any control over that country's judicial system, but everyone knows that is not the way things are, and that, at any rate, this problem must be solved by the government and the Foreign Ministry, and they are doing this.

The eminent leader stressed: The overall assessment of 17 years of victorious Islamic revolution, the ideas and viewpoints of the late Imam [Khomeyni] and the people reveal the fact that the Muslim and steadfast nation of Iran is not a nation that can be dragged this way or that with any kind of threat or pressure, or that can be prevented from following its own way. Anyone in the world who believes that the Iranian nation can be influenced by force and bullying is making a bad mistake.

The eminent leader referred to issues regarding the first round of elections to the Majles and to the efforts made by the liberals, those opposed to the velayat [institution of rule by a supreme religious leader] and those opposed to the Imam and to Islam, and said to the people: You must be aware and know who you are sending to the Majles; people who do not try, in the name of freedom and liberalism, to undermine the foundations of Islamic thinking, people who are devoted [feda'i] to Islam and know that the problems of the country and the nation can only be solved with Islam.

Iran: Tehran Radio on Khamene'i Address

LD2403181096 Tehran Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran First Program Network in Persian 1000 GMT 24 Mar 96

[Address by Ayatollah 'Ali Khamene'i, leader of the Islamic revolution, to a public gathering in Mashhad on 23 March — recorded]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] [Passage omitted]

I want to mention something to you, dear people. With regard to world issues, the Islamic republic believes in international cooperation. We believe that if the benevolent people of the world were united, world affairs would be reformed. We believe this. But this is very difficult to achieve. Therefore we have to do two different things in the world. First, our main duty is international cooperation, joint work, and cooperation with other nations and governments. This is our main duty on the international scene. Second, there is an emergency responsibility, and this is to fight. Yes, we are forced to fight against the enemies of this country in the world. I wish our nation had no enemies and we did not have to fight. But the nation has stubborn, obstinate, wicked, lowly, deceiving, deceitful, and dangerous enemies. We have to fight them.

In this international struggle, we have two types of enemies. First, there are the main enemies who are the main problem. We have to fight them. But we don't fight the lesser enemies. We try to reach an understanding with them and to point out their mistakes and to change their minds about their enmity. This is how we deal with the lesser enemies. Even sometimes it is not possible to call them an enemy. The problem is with the main enemy. And who are the main enemies of the Islamic republic in the world? Today, the main enemies are Zionism and world arrogance.

The main problem is the enmity of the Zionists and the arrogance against Islam, the system of the Islamic republic, and the Iranian nation. A proper translation for Zionism today is the aggressive, arrogant, rebellious, and bullying Government of the United States. They make up the main arrogant powers in the world today. The story of the arrogant powers is bitter. It is a bitter story for all nations. World arrogance means the presence of a power in the world that is inconsiderate of the interests of nations, the demands of human beings, and the values of the human race. It values only one thing and that is its interests that it follows with a spirit of arrogance, expansionism, and bullying. Much like the highway bandits who think of nothing but their own interests and even then use a language of violence, force, cruelty, and coercion. This is the state of affairs with America. But, of course, more evil than America is the Zionist government in the occupied Palestine. Why? Because the American Government is a government based on a nation. But the usurping Zionist government is not a nation. The nation that belongs to those territories is homeless today. From the very frist day, Israel was created through injustice and murder. It was created through deceit and lies. With British support a group of thugs and aggressors came to the land of Palestine and forced out its population. Even today they and their children, millions of them, more than a million people, continue to live in tents and in the condition of camps. In tents or something similar. In hovels outside Palestine. The Palestinian people have to live outside Palestine in hovels and camps while their homes and motherland are used by people who have gone there from Europe, Australia, America, Asia, and Africa to create a false nation and to live there under this pretext. They have also created a government. But, fundamentally speaking, such a nation never existed and never had an identity.

The crime committed by the Islamic republic is that it says this. Contrary to other governments, which are either afraid of the Untied States or enticed by it, and overlooked this just observation and concealed it, the Islamic republic states it openly. It says that justice is justice. Injustice is injustice.

We cannot deny that there was a Palestinian nation and that it is homeless today. We cannot deny that the land of Palestine has been usurped from the Palestinian people and not even in a superficially polite or correct way. No. By murder. By killings. By deceit. By lies. By force. By bloodletting. By massacres. The Israeli Government came into existence through massacres. The Israeli Government came into existence through treachery, deceit, and bloodletting. From the start, the Israeli Government came into existence by trampling human values underfoot. The rights of a nation were sacrificed under the feet of the Zionist invaders who entered occupied Palestine.

Throughout the 50 or so years life of this fake government, there has been constant suppression, constant murder, constant lies, deceit, aggression, attacks against human beings, against the innocent. This has been the source of the survival and continued existence of the Government of Israel. This is what Israel is. This being the case, the U.S. president — it is truly amazing, he does not seem to feel any shame — stands before international public opinion, in broad daylight, and says in a loud voice: We want to cooperate with Israel to prevent terrorism. One is filled with amazement. What can one call this? Is this negligence? Is this unfairness? Is this arrogance and bullying? What does this mean?

An Israel that came into existence on the basis of terrorism — today, too, the most vicious and most dangerous terrorists of the world are those very same people who are in positions of power in the wronged, occupied country of Palestine. You want to cooperate with them in order to fight terrorism? The terrorists? Which terrorists? With people who have been driven out of their homeland, have reached the end of their tether after years of pressure, have brought a fist out of their sleeves, are shouting out? Are these terrorists?

We state these facts. We do not conceal these facts. We consider it a sin to hide these clearest of facts simply in order to please the United States. [crowds chant "Death to America"]

Many people throughout the world, people who are in commercial and political contact with us, tell us confidentially, tell our envoys and our people, they say: The reason for the enmity of the United States against you has to do with precisely this issue of the Middle East. They mean the issue of Israel. They say why are you opposed to it? They say quite frankly that the question of human rights, this or that trial, women's rights and other such things that are said against the

Islamic republic in American and Zionist media in the world, they say that all these are no more than words.

We knew this ourselves. Now, everyone admits it. I myself used to tell people who had a sense of weakness. I would say, why are you deceived by propaganda? Why should you think that, when the U.S. says 'human rights,' it is really concerned about the violation of human rights in Iran? They have no pity for human beings. They themselves are the greatest violators of human rights. They are people who burned 80 human beings alive in a house in broad daylight in an American city [Waco] and did not bat an eyelid. What do they care about human beings? What do they care about human rights? What do they know about human rights? They are talking about something else. They are concerned about something else.

They say, why do you not decide to get along with Israel? They say, why do you not sign the death sentence of the Palestinian nation as others have done? That is what they are saying. I myself always explained this to everyone. Now, they are admitting it themselves. They tell us, gentlemen, this pressure by the United States, this economic embargo, this hostile and wicked propaganda from elements within the American legislature and within the American judiciary against the Islamic republic all have to do with the issue of Israel. They say, why do you not accept the Middle East peace? Why do you say this is not peace? This is compromise between a lamb and a wolf. Why do you say this? Why do you not sign the death sentence of the Palestinians as others have done? This is what they want from us. This is what it is about.

So, today, at the head of this nation's foreign enemies, with which we have our main foreign political battle in the world, is the corrupt, usurper, evil, Zionist regime ruling over occupied Palestine and, behind it, the regime of the United States of America. The United States, with that vast size, with its scientific advances, a big country, a big nation, has become an instrument manipulated by the Zionists; like a giant whose leash is in the hands of a dog. The dog takes him wherever he likes. They used to show some films like this once. A dog takes a giant wherever he likes.

Now, the U.S. Administration, with its enormous size, with its vast wealth, with its past history, with the political, economic, and military importance that it believes it has in the world, has become a toy in the hands of the Zionists and the Israeli Government. When the U.S. President adopts a decision against the Islamic republic, he goes to a gathering of American Zionists and presents his report about it there; that is how it becomes known to the world. This is a disgrace for the American nation. This is a disgrace. These are the main enemies.

Of course, there is still some hostility against us here and there in the world; there is wickedness and enmity against the Islamic republic and the Iranian nation. But these are not so important. They are not the fundamental issue. I am referring to this recent incident regarding the German judiciary. This was a very ugly and contemptible move aimed at pleasing the Zionists. Of course, the German Government is standing aside and saying that this is a matter that concerns the German judicial system. Well, we know and they also know that we know that it is not as if the German Government has no control over the judicial system. It does. We have information that it has exercised influence in some sections of the judiciary. This, in effect, is Zionist pressure on the German Government and the German judicial system. These things do exist but they are not important. These are matters which our government and our Foreign Ministry, which, God be thanked, are working well, should resolve. And they will resolve it. This is not an issue that poses a problem to the nation. What is important for the nation is exactly what I said before — it is the problem of America and Israel.

The basis of the problem, dear people of Iran, is what I have to say after experiencing 17 years of the pride-inspiring victory of the Islamic republic system, and after summing up the views of our departed Imam and those of the people. What I have to say is brief: If any government, community, nation, or individual in the world imagines that the Iranian nation could be influenced through force and threats, they are highly mistaken. [crowd chants "God is great," "Khamene'i is the leader," "Death to America," "Death to Israel"]

This nation, which put up a brave resistance during the imposed war and which stood steadfast against the threats and wicked deeds of arrogance and enemies for 17 years, has at least proved to all the world that it is not a nation that can be forced and threatened to take this or that path. Look at these mothers! Look at these lion-hearted women who dispatched their offspring to the battlefronts, for the sake of God — just like people sending their sons to their weddings — and not even a frown crossed their brows. Look at them. Look at this resistant nation.

Look at the dangerous obstacles that the Iranian nation has surmounted in these 17 years — the many different threats at the start of the revolution; the internal enemies, the Liberals; the opponents of the Imam [Khomeyni]; opponents of velayat [rule of supreme jurisprudent]; opponents of calling this republic an Islamic republic; opponents of calling the Majles an Islamic Majles. Yes, in the first term of the Majles when our eminent Imam referred to the Majles as the Islamic Majles in a letter to the Majles, it was very subtle of him to add the word "Islam" to the name of the Majles.

Imam was not only subtle and clever but he was an experienced person. He knew that if the name "Islam" had been linked with the Majles at the outset of the constitutional movement [of 1906-1911, also known as the Constitutional Revolution] and had a constitutional movement emerged with the blood of the nation, in the name of Islam and under the leadership of the ulema, then Islam would not have been left behind for 60 years. The Imam knew this and wrote in his letter: the Islamic Consultative Assembly.

So, the deputies in the Majles said that this should be made into a law and become official. The name of the Islamic Consultative Assembly should be legalized. There was debate in the Majles and in that very Majles, among the deputies that had been elected by these religious and revolutionary people, there were those who stood up and said: No sir, what do you mean by an Islamic name? Well, really! We could not believe that there would be anyone in the Islamic system who would oppose this move barely two years after the Islamic revolution. But they did. This is why we keep saying you should understand who you are sending to the Majles. You should send people who are devoted to Islam; who know that it is only Islam that will resolve the problems of this country and this nation.

You should send to the Majles experienced individuals who will not be easily deceived and would not want to weaken the foundation of Islamic thought in this country under the name of freedom and liberalism. These are the people who should be going to the Majles. These are the people who will stand steadfast and defend you against those enemies. These are the people you should chose. This is what the Iranian nation is about. It is this Iranian nation that has experienced so many different situations during these 17 years and has stood steadfast, following the path of God and Islam.

And today, too, since the day of the victory of the revolution, we are not only 17 years ahead but dozens of years more so, thanks be to God. We have come a long way in these past 17 years. [passage omitted]

Whatever you see during these 17 years has been achieved through your help and the strength of devoted officials, in spite of all the obstacles and difficulties. And today, foreign enemies see this, are envious and bothered by it, but have no choice. God be thanked that, in spite of foreign enemies, in spite of America and Israel, and in spite of those who cannot bear to see the progress made by this nation, we shall increase our relations at a world level. And in spite of those who would like to see Iran isolated, this country is increasing its relations daily, and even if there are people who, under the influence of America, would want to be hostile toward the Islamic republic, we are not afraid. Thanks to the grace of God, this nation is capable of standing on its own two feet.

This nation has been repeatedly threatened during these 17 years by different governments. It has even been threatened with breaks in relations over different incidents when, the gentlemen in charge of European countries have, collectively, withdrawn their ambassadors from Iran, believing this would cause the sky to fall in and the world to turn upside down. But nothing changed at all. No doubt European governments remember. We hope they do; we hope they will not make mistakes. There was a day when all European ambassadors left Tehran, meaning that they had suspended relations with us. The Islamic republic said goodbye to them. After a while, they realized that the Islamic republic does not appear to be needing them. And thank God, it really did not need them. So, one after another the ambassadors returned. It has always been like this.

What is important is that this nation should appreciate itself. What is important is that the country's officials should appreciate this nation — and they do. Anyone working in any sector should know that this nation is a great, powerful, faithful, and undefeatable nation so long as it preserves unity of expression and reliance on God. So long as you do this, there is no power in the world that could overcome and defeat you.

Iran: President Rafsanjani Arrives for Visit to Bandar Abbas

LD2403092996 Tehran IRNA in English 0628 GMT 24 Mar 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Bandar Abbas, Hormuzgan Prov., March 24, IRNA — President Akbar Hashemi-Rafsanjani arrived here Sunday [24 March] morning and was welcomed by provincial officials.

The president, who is here to inspect and inaugurate several development projects, after a brief stay in this provincial capital, left for the Persian Gulf island of Qeshm.

The president is to inaugurate the 'Sarkhoun' gas refinery on Monday.

President Rafsanjani is accompanied by Oil Minister Gholam Reza Aqazadeh [Kho'i].

Iran: President Visits Biotechnology Center in Qeshm

LD2403200296 Tehran IRNA in English 1939 GMT 24 Mar 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Qeshm Island, March 24, IRNA — President Akbar Hashemi-Rafsanjani on Sunday [24 March] visited Iran's biotechnology center now nearing completion in Qeshm Island, in the Persian Gulf.

The center that occupies an under-roof area of 1,700 square meters is at a spot about 18 kilometers from the island's center 'Qeshm'.

The principal products of the center will be microorganism based antigens for use against carcinoma, bone-transplant pieces from corals, vitamins A and D, and protein enhancers for foods.

Other products of the center will also include oinments for topical use and for skin injuries, polysaccharides for manufacturing prostheses, and natural pigments from algae.

Director of the center Mrs. Moazzami said the center would be ready for operation later this spring. The center is being built with a capital investment of rls [rials] 2.5 billion.

President Rafsanjani paid tribute to the people behind the project and expressed his personal confidence that the center would shortly be the pride of the nation.

On Sunday, the Iranian president also visited a factory that manufactures industrial garments in the free zone area of Qeshm, Iran's Persian Gulf island across the commercial port city of Bandar Abbas.

Iran: President Rafsanjani Opens Sarkhoun Gas Refinery

LD2503102496 Tehran IRNA in English 0914 GMT 25 Mar 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Bandar Abbas, Hormuzgan Prov., Mar 25 (IRNA) — President Akbar Hashemi-Rafsanjani inaugurated 'Sarkhoun 2' Gas Refinery here Monday morning (25 March).

The refinery, which is 25 km northeast of the provincial capital of Bandar Abbas, has been designed to refine some 500 million cubic feet of gas a day. The initial capacity of the refinery is 375 million cubic feet. A total of $70 million plus 25 billion rials has been invested on installations for the project.

Meanwhile, laying of pipelines from Sarkhoun to Rafsanjan, in Kerman Province, for transfer of natural gas, has cost some $90 million plus 22 billion rials.

The whole project has been designed by engineers and experts of the National Iranian Gas Company (NIGC) and has been carried out by Iranian contractors.

The refinery is to supply the gas needed by the Bandar Abbas Power Plant, Oil Refinery and Aluminum Complex. It will also supply gas to Hormuzgan Steel Industry, Sarcheshmeh Power Plant and residential and industrial areas of Sirjan, Zhareez, Rafsanjan and Kerman.

President Rafsanjani, accompanied by Oil Minister Gholam Reza Aqazadeh-Kho'i arrived here Sunday morning to inspect and inaugurate several major projects.

Iran: Commentary on U.S. 'Political, Economic Isolation' of Iran

LD2203134196 Tehran Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran in English 1130 GMT 22 Mar 96

[Station commentary]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Recent reports by the Western sources indicate that the United States attempts aimed at the political and economic isolation of the Islamic Republic of Iran have been intensified. Approval of a bill against Iran in one of the committees of the U.S. House of Representatives and intensification of Washington's pressures on the EU member states, as well as the Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina, in order to reduce the level of their ties with Tehran are all indications of intensified anti-Iranian policies of the U.S. statesmen.

According to a German news agency, one of the committees of the U.S. House of Representatives approved a bill with the overwhelming majority of votes on 21 March on the basis of which all the foreign companies which invest in the Iranian oil industry or place the relevant equipment to the disposal of Iran will be placed in America's black list. These companies will also be deprived of Washington's financial aid and some sanctions will be imposed on them.

New York's Republican Senator John Gilman [name and title as heard], who has designed this bill, has once again accused Tehran of extending support for terrorism, trying to produce weapons of mass destruction and has concluded that in order to fight state terrorism, it is about time now to act since there is no longer any room for talks.

The U.S. allies in Europe and Asia should realize the point that from east Europe, from Bosnia, the reports that Washington has made its aid to Bosnia—Herzegovina conditional on lower level of ties between Bosnia and Iran, as desired by Washington [sentence as heard]. The United States, the Zionist regime, and the followers of Washington's anti-Iranian policies have never presented an acceptable document to prove their baseless charges against the Islamic Republic of Iran; for what the U.S. statesmen describe as support for terrorism is confirmation of freedom-seeking movements of the Middle East by Tehran.

In view of the U.S. open and official support for the terrorist operations of anti-Islamic revolution grouplets, it seems that neglecting the realities of the Islamic Iran is a result of the American statesmen's lack of political wisdom and understanding; for the world is fully aware of the reality that Tehran does not plan to develop weapons of mass destruction and all efforts by Washington and Tel Aviv aimed at attributing the recent (?Near East) terrorist operations to Iran have failed. Such unfounded claims are made against the Islamic Republic of Iran over and over again because development and reinforcement of the free and independent Islamic Iran as a pattern and example is not to be in the interest of the U.S. regional policies and greed.

Iran: Tehran Radio Reviews Year of 'Problems' for U.S. Policy

NC2303131996 Tehran Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran First Program Network in Persian 0345 GMT 23 Mar 96

[Commentary by News Research and Commentary Group]

[FBIS Translated Text] The [Iranian] year that just ended was fraught with numerous vicissitudes and events relating to U.S. foreign and domestic policy. Washington encountered difficulties and failures, as well as progress in its foreign policy aims to maintain its position in the international community.

U.S. foreign policy encountered a plethora of problems in 1374 [Iranian year beginning 21 March 1995]: promoting the Dayton accord to resolve the Balkan crisis, instability in the Arab-Israeli compromise, Russian opposition to NATO expansion and the membership of East and Central Europen countries in NATO, failure in its efforts to impose anti-Iranian and anti-Cuban policies on its allies, the trade war with the PRC and Japan, and with the White House's tension-generating policy on PRC-Taiwan relations.

On the domestic front, the United States experienced various incidents and problems, each of which can be considered singularly unprecedented. These were: the explosion in the federal center in Oklahoma, which resulted in the killing and injuring of more than 400 people; the protest march by 1 million black men in Washington; and the months-long impasse between the White House and the Congress on the budget bill. These three phenomena revealed in various ways the social, economic, and political fissures within the United States.

These events created ideological conflicts that according to many analysts are unprecedented since the American Civil. The 19 April 1995 Oklahoma explosion is one of the most remarkable occurrences of the past half-century, an event rooted in U.S. social developments. This attack on a U.S. federal police [FBI] office occurred exactly two years after the massacre of more than 80 members and supporters of [Branch Davidian] leader David Koresh and generated immense controversy. It revealed the existence and nature of a group known as the Michigan Militia and numerous similar extreme-right groups opposed to the federal government. This event also raised questions relating to strident claims that blind terrorism originates outside the United States, and particularly in the Middle East.

There are various theories about the roots of terrorism, but in fact, it may be stated that terrorism is a phenomenon that surfaces in reaction to the implementation of vindictive measures with the ruling party ignoring the wishes of groups that consider themselves representatives of the people. It stems from the hardships that such groups have to endure.

An example of this is the suppression and massacre of the David Koresh cult at its base in Waco, which was followed by the Oklahoma bombing and the explosion on a passenger train in Arizona last year. One of the objectives of the march by the blacks in the month of Mehr [23 September-22 October] was to protest the racist behavior of the police and the U.S. judicial system toward Blacks, especially during the Los Angeles protests. This march was the largest such gathering the United States has ever seen. The participation of more than 1 million men in this march is an indicator of the pitiful conditions that they endure, as well as of their opposition to discrimination, violence, and crime, conditions directly attributable to the government's discriminatory policies and the moral decadence that prevails in American society.

The thing about that million-man march that drew the most attention at the time was the pivotal, basic role of Islam. Many of the blacks chanted Islamic slogans such as "God is Great" and "There is no god but Allah," thus highlighting the role of Islam as the only salve for healing their historic wounds. This ever-increasing inclination toward Islam in the United States has transformed Islam into the most rapidly growing religion. It is predicted that Islam will become the second most widespread religion, after Christianity, by the year 2000.

Iran: U.S. Call For Anti-Terrorism Conference Viewed

NC2403170896 Tehran JOMHURI-YE ESLAMI in Persian 17 Mar 96 pp 1, 13

[Editorial: "Clinton—Preparing To Make Up for the Failure in Sharm al—Shaykh"]

[FBIS Translated Text] The disgraceful failure of the Sharm al-Shaykh conference was extremely unexpected for America and the Zionists, who were taken by surprise.

Now the Zionists are bitter and have prepared a new mission for Clinton. The U.S. President has invited the heads of 28 countries to participate in an international conference in Washington. He has been assigned the mission of holding an American version of the Sharm al-Shaykh conference, in the hope of making up for its failure.

Up to this stage, the Cairo regime has been unable to accomplish its mission. The Zionists, who are extremely upset, hope to be able to hide this defeat and failure and to bring up the issue of terrorism once again by resorting to a new propaganda maneuver. The point is that the Sharm al-Shaykh conference was a disgraceful game aimed at boosting the morale of the Zionist occupiers. The Cairo regime's mission was to lift the Zionists out of their isolation and to take all the compromising Arab regime's to the feet of Israel. Of course, the Cairo regime did the best it could. But the anti-occupationist struggles in the region were more serious than to be crushed or seriously confronted by such disgraceful propaganda games.

The Sharm al-Shaykh conference was convened in a bid to boost the morale of the Zionists and to crush the morale of the anti-occupation strugglers. But what happened was exactly the opposite; and even Clinton and his associates were terrified by the continuation of this game in the Middle East. Although Clinton was to fly directly to Jerusalem, and the plane carrying him and his entourage was to land in Jerusalem airport, fearing the repercussions of this attempt, Clinton preferred to land at Ben Gurion Airport. Of course, the head of the Zionist regime was upset with this decision by Clinton and refused to personally welcome him at Ben Gurion Airport. However, the point is that even Clinton and his associates are fully aware that not only the process of events were not to Israel's benefit as the Zionists hoped it would be, but that, on the contrary, incidents similar to the recent ones could inflict irreparable blows on America and Israel.

Clinton returned empty-handed from Sharm al-Shaykh and the occupied territories of Palestine. However, the Zionists continue to want to save what has remained of the American President's face for the sake of political-propaganda purposes. Clinton's call for the convening of an international conference on terrorism adopts its meaning precisely from this angle. Of course, Clinton and his advisers hope to be able to exploit such propaganda games to gain the support of the Zionists in the upcoming American presidential elections. But, in his four years in office, the President has nothing but his subserviency to the Zionists to show the American public in order to gain their support.

All existing facts show that the Sharm al-Shaykh conference, Clinton's hasty visit to Israel, and the conference in Washington all constitute a propaganda move for "domestic consumption." Even Clinton himself knew from the very start that such steps could not help the Zionists gain anything, but that they are merely aimed at gaining Zionist support for him in the elections as a reward for his good services. But will this wish by Clinton be fulfilled? Who knows?! He may fail even in this and will have to taste the bitterness of defeat in the presidential elections too.

Iran: Paper Says Germany 'Duped' by MKO

LD2403211796 Tehran JOMHURI-YE ELSAMI in Persian 17 Mar 96 p 2

[Unattributed commentary: "The Germans Have Been Duped!"]

[FBIS Translated Text] The German Supreme Court has issued a warrant for the arrest of Mr. 'Ali Fallahian, the intelligence minister of the Islamic Republic of Iran, charged with involvement in the murders of 4 Iranian Kurdish opposition at Mykonos restaurant in Berlin in 1371 [Iranian year beginning 21 March 1992].

While confirming this, Rolf Hannich, the spokesman of the Federal Prosecutor's Office, said: "There is a possibility that the Iranian intelligence minister had organized and directed the incident." Immediately following the publication of the report Mas'ud Rajavi, the ringleader of the criminal and terrorist gang, the hypocrites [monafeqin, meaning Mojahedin-e Khalq, MKO], issued a statement expressing gladness about and supporting the decision of the German Federal Prosecutor and calling for serious confrontation with the Islamic Republic of Iran.

This is while Germany is recognized as a haven for the members of the hypocrites' terrorist mini-group, and the members of the mini-group have extensive connection with the German intelligence network as their stool pigeons. The German Government has so far not been prepared to explain the close ties between the hypocrite terrorists and the intelligence organization of that country.

Thus terrorists who have criminal records in the courts of the Islamic Republic of Iran and are sought by the law are recognized as government intelligence sources in Germany. Of course the Bonn government may explain that it is free to choose its intelligence gathering sources; but it seems that, this time too, the Germans have been duped.

The announcement of the German Government's decision happening at the same time as the defeat of the Zionists in the Sharm al-Shaykh session is not a coincidence. Truth is, international Zionism did not achieve any of its goals at the Sharm al-Shaykh session and was not able to attribute in any way the recent retaliatory attacks in the occupied lands to the Islamic Iran and win the support of the European countries. That was an unexpected defeat for the Zionists, but it seems that the German Federal Prosecutor has rushed to the aid of the Zionists and has fed the Zionist media with desirable propaganda fodder at a very opportune moment.

It was for that precise reason that the report on the issuing of a warrant for the arrest of the Iranian intelligence minister was first broadcast by the Israeli radio, and proved that all the propaganda starts in one place, that it is the German Zionist circles that are behind the incident and that the hypocrites terrorist mini-group are their espionage arm.

It may be extremely degrading for the Germans that their government and judicial system are the playthings of the Zionists. Usually, in every country its judiciary is expected to be independent and not even be influenced by its government. But the German judiciary has lost its independence and, incited by Zionists, has become involved in disgraced political propaganda games and has become a tool in the hands of the enemies of the German people.

Under whose influence the German judiciary is, does not concern us directly. Of course, the Bonn government will suffer because of it. However, in any case, the decision on the matter falls back on the German people. But, so far as it concerns Islamic Iran, we shall never allow such disgraced political propaganda games to be played in other countries against the reputation of the Islamic Republic of Iran through the misuse of ostensibly legal levers.

The government of the Islamic Republic of Iran should not easily overlook and underestimate this offensive action of the Germans. Now is the time for the country's decision-making centers to reconsider the extensive German-Iranian economic ties and not allow our good will toward the Germans to be taken advantage of anymore.

The bitter incident of Siemens' sabotage of the Bushehr nuclear power station agreement should have alerted us and told us that the Germans are not trustworthy. Furthermore, the amazing incident of the [Helmut] Szimkus espionage case should have assured us that the Germans would use any opportunity against us. But, unfortunately, we were not able to learn from the past and trusted the Germans in vain.

Why should Germany be our first trade partners despite the Siemens incident? Why should we have 2.4 billion marks worth of annual imports from Germany and buy most of our consumer goods solely from the German market? While those same goods could be obtained from elsewhere with similar quality and comparatively cheaper and under more favorable conditions? That is another warning which if not taken seriously today, we would undoubtedly be sorry tomorrow.

The US and Britain put a lot of effort into monitoring Iran — Britain's GCHQ [Government Communications Headquarters] eavesdropping centre advertised for Farsi speakers reentry — and there is grudging respect for the professionalism of its clandestine networks. "They've tripped up more than usual recently," said one well-placed official, "but it's not surprising that water has fallen from the top of the iceberg because the iceberg is very large."

It is common ground that Iran supports Hizballah guerrillas in south Lebanon (even as its ally Syria is trying to rein them in), and played a role in two devastating car bomb attacks on Israeli and Jewish targets in Argentina. And there is wide agreement on official Iranian involvement in the killings of dissidents in Europe — and not only in the Berlin assassinations that are upsetting Mr Fallahian's Nowruz holiday.

In recent years Bosnia has been added to America's evilempire style catalogue of complaints, though ironically Iran was one of the few countries that agreed with the US call to lift the arms embargo. Washington has protested vigorously about mojahidin fighters and trumpeted the recent exposure of Iranian advisers at a Bosnian government dirty-tricks centre, complete with boobytrapped toys.

The US has done much to isolate Iran: Japan and Germany have been urged to withold badly-needed credit and, having banned US trade and investment in Iran last years Congress is now working on legislation that would penalise foreign companies investing more than $40 million in the country's vital oil and gas industry.

In an election year in the US — and, perhaps more critically, in Israel-allied interests may not stop Washington taking stronger action now that the link has been established between Iran and terrorism targeting Israel: "I am sorry if we offend our friends," sneered one democratic Representative, "but the sight of arms and legs strewn over the streets of Tel Aviv offends me."

Yet experience teaches that unilateral trade sanctions are not effective and, more seriously, can also undermine UN-anchored multilateral ones. Or, as the former US Defence Secretary, Dick Cheney, described the Congressional approach last week: "We are going to shut you out and close the door and turn off the relationship and that will force you to do what we want you to do." Russia, meanwhile, is broadening its own relations with Iran.

Some experts argue pursuing Iran in this way could end up exaggerating its real importance. It reinforces the impression that obsession is no way to run a foreign policy, especially for a man of legendary caution like Warren Christopher. "There are plenty of bad things to say about Iran without making things up" argues Gary Sick, adviser on Iran to the Carter administration.

Across the Atlantic there is sympathy for such criticism. Despite Bonn's belated action against the George Smiley of the Islamic Republic, European Union members are divided over whether to continue their "critical dialogue" with Tehran. Those who do a lot of business say it should go on. Smaller countries which do not have their doubts. Britain, where the Foreign Office often seems to elevate tactics to the level of principle, is on the fence.

Testing times lie ahead for Iran's relationship with Europe: within the next two weeks an EU delegation is to visit Tehran to try to extract the sort of unequivocal condemnation of terrorism the US would like but no one else really expects, while in Washington officials are to meet to discuss intelligence-sharing and other practical moves.

Britain has long and frustrating experience of trying to annul the Rushdie fatwa and seriously doubts that attempts to browbeat Iran will work. Evasion and obfuscation seem far more likely than clear-cut answers from a state where the word terrorism is so often qualified by inverted commas, where one man's suicide-bomber is another man's martyr, and divine retribution really works.

Iran: Paper Discusses German Warrant Against Minister

LD2403210096 Tehran IRAN in Persian 18 Mar 96 p 2

[Commentary by Hamideh Fahimi: "A Few Points About This Story"]

[FBIS Translated Text] The outline of the story:

The German public prosecutor's office claimed on Friday [15 March] that the intelligence minister of the Islamic Republic of Iran was involved in the killing of four Iranian Kurds in Berlin in the Christian year 1992.

The first point:

The statement by the German public prosecutor's office was issued at exactly the same time as the escalation of the negative propaganda of the United States and the Zionist regime against Islamic Iran and the end of the Sharm al-Shaykh conference. In that gathering, American and Israeli officials made a great deal of effort to impose their anti-Iranian policy on the participants. Although the negative reply given by the participants disappointed the United States and Israel in their bid to bring other countries into line with their anti-Iranian policies, nevertheless, it seems as if the decision to make unfounded allegations against an Iranian minister was one of the clear outcomes of the Sharm al-Shaykh conference, contrived and designed by Zionist circles and raised by supporters of the Green Party and the Socialists (with clear affiliations to Zionist circles).

The second point:

The available legal documents and evidence reveal that the people killed in the Berlin incident were involved in the murder of at least 80 civilians and over 30 private Kurdish plaintiffs have lodged complaints against them in Iranian courts. On the other hand, the murder incident took place following the escalation of internal disputes between counterrevolutionary Kurdish groups. Taking these two points into account makes it clear who could have been involved in the assassination of the murdered people. The anti-Iranian activities of the enemies of the Islamic Revolution must also not be overlooked in this assassination.

The third point:

The welcome shown by the United States, Israel, and fugitive terrorists to the decision of the German public prosecutor reveals that the circles and countries that have, in the past, not concealed their displeasure at the close ties between Tehran and Bonn and the terrorist grouplets that hold their meetings on German territory are continuing their efforts to undermine these ties.

In these circumstances, it is necessary for the German Government to reiterate the importance for that country to maintain its independent positions and opinions — regardless of the baseless claims made by that country's judicial centers — and not to allow those opposed to strengthening ties between Tehran and Bonn to succeed in inflicting a blow on these relations. It is also important to note that indifference by the German Government toward the anti-Iranian moves of that country's judiciary would be seen as an insult to the Iranian people and would, undoubtedly, alter the beliefs of the Iranian nation regarding Germany's independence of action.

The last point:

Despite the propaganda machinations in Bonn, it is natural that the Islamic Republic of Iran only considers the positions of the Bonn government as that country's official stance. On this basis, it is necessary for Islamic Iran to adjust its relations with Germany on the basis of the positions adopted by the Bonn government. Maintaining the current nature of these relations at any cost would not seem to be a correct idea. Bonn officials must understand this important point and accept the fact that, if the case of the murder of four Iranian Kurds is pursued free of the pressures from Zionist circles and fugitive terrorists, this time, too, the falseness of the anti-Iranian claims contrived and designed by the United States and Israel will become clear.

Iran: Daily Terms German Warrant 'Zionist Scenario'

LD2303155196 Tehran ABRAR in Persian 18 Mar 96 pp 1, 2

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] A Zionist scenario, the German Federal Prosecutor has issued an arrest warrant for our country's Information Minister Mr. Ali Fallahian and has asked for the cooperation of Interpol in this connection. [passage omitted]

Since this decision was made several years after the start of the original trial, one's attention is naturally turned to the Sharm al- Shaykh summit in Egypt. Although the statement of the summit did not mention the names of the specific countries that America and the Zionist regime had sought, but the Zionist grudge was so strong that one had to expect the possibility of measures being initiated in other states. One of these states was Germany.

Germany is a country that from a long time ago has been the target of Zionist activities. This is because:

1) Among European countries, Germany has the strongest relations with Iran.

2) Some German citizens feel extremely guilty about the dark record of their leaders in killing Jews during the 1930s and 1940s. Some of these citizens are prepared to do anything to win the satisfaction of the Zionist regime. Among these, one can mention the postponement of the joint conference of Islam and Christianity in Bonn. [passage omitted]

Political analysts believe that the staging of the Zionist scenario in Germany not only targets the good relations between Tehran and Bonn, but it also tries to undermine Iran's ties with Europe as a whole and prevent the continuation of the thus far useful policy of "critical dialogue".

These analysts refer to the fact that the emphasis by the leaders of EU states, including Germany, on having good relations with Iran has led to the dissatisfaction of America and the Zionist regime. They say: The deterioration of these ties [Iran-EU] is another step forward within the framework of the policy of isolating Iran and also excluding Europe from the strategic Middle East region. This is because America, in a bid to extend its leadership over the West and the world as a whole into the 21st century, intends to bring the Middle East under its domination as well.

Political analysts, furthermore, believe that one cannot consider the German judiciary and intelligence services on the one hand, and the Bonn Government on the other, as one and the same. In this way, one cannot say that the move by the German prosecutor was initiated by the German government.

They say: The continuation of similar moves in Germany will not only lead to wide-spread objection among the Iranian public opinion, but it will also result in the deterioration of relations between the two countries. This is because the Iranian nation will not tolerate insults, and the whole affair can undermine their belief in Germany's independence of mind and action.

Iran: Spy Affair Threatens Relations With West

MS2503110496 London THE GUARDIAN in English 25 Mar 96 p 11

[Article by Ian Black: "Shadow of the Pariah"]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] No one seriously expects 'Ali Fallahian, Iran's sinister minister of intelligence, to turn up in a German court — even after a break during the current Nowtuz new year holiday — to answer charges of conspiracy over the murder of four Kurdish dissidents in a Berlin restaurant in 1992.

But the indictment of Tehran's top spymaster by its closest friend in Europe may still mark a watershed in attitudes to one of the world's leading "pariah" states: after gleefully approving suicide bombings designed to wreck the Arab-Israeli peace process, have the mullahs, real daggers under their cloaks, now managed to widen and unite the opposition against them?

It will be an achievement if they have: Iran has been an American obsession since the country was famously "lost" in the 1979 Islamic revolution. Warren Christopher, Bill Clinton's secretary of state, has never forgotten the humiliation of the embassy hostage crisis that lasted for 444 days: the other hostages who languished in the cellars of Beirut — which also had strong Iranian links — came later and added to America's bitterness.

Most Europeans do not share this: business interests and pragmatism have dictated the nature of their relationships with Iran since the demise of the Peacock Throne. Germany has always valued its sole, though commercially substantial, Middle Eastern toehold, while Britain's links with Tehran where a central thoroughfare engagingly named Bobby Sands Avenue helps set the tone — were poor long before the Salman Rushdie affair.

Yet the rise of political Islam after the end of the cold war and the winding-down of the Arab-Israeli conflict in it familiar inter-state form have thrust Iran to centre stage, paradoxically just as its revolutionary zeal has become far more rhetorical than real. Now it is finally being confronted with its own propaganda.

The American "Great Satan" and "Zionist injustice" are still vilified in its newspapers; "hypocrisy" and "arrogance" are the favourite words in its political lexicon. And even Iran's ostensibly principled positions — such as opposing the extension the nuclear non-proliferation treaty on the terms of the great powers — look much less so if reports of its own nuclear ambitions are to believed (and Iraq's undetected clandestine progress remembered). Repression home remains bad.

In its backyard, Iran has bought Russian submarines and Chinese missiles to upgrade its offensive capability around the strategic straits of Hormuz, though it is no match for the US fifth fleet, the vanguard of America's policy of "dual contamination". Heavy US hints of Iranian-inspired subversion in Gulf shaykhdoms are not believed locally and evidence is again hard to pin down.

Iran's objections to the Middle East peace process are a matter of principle though it is not clear whether it has thought through the implications of Yasir 'Arafat's abandonment of armed struggle: the horrific suicide bombings that killed 60 Israelis in 10 days in February and March were described by the country's official news agency, IRNA, as "divine retribution" — a label which hardly squared with President Rafsanjani's insistence that he condemns terrorism.

The case against Iran is easy to state but hard to prove: the US and Britain point to its links with Hamas and Islamic Jihad, the Palestinian fundamentalist groups responsible for the bombings. Israel has been vocal too though it was striking that John Major was alone in joining Shimon Peres in singling out Tehran at the Sharm al-Shaykh "peacemakers' summit".

Intelligence and politics are closely linked. Guarding the holy grail of "sources and methods" is said to be more important than the public exposure of the smoking gun or the incriminating bank transfer: for who doubts that the Iranians are up to no good?

The US and Britain put a lot of effort into monitoring Iran — Britain's GCHQ [Government Communications Headquarters] eavesdropping centre advertised for Farsi speakers reentry — and there is grudging respect for the professionalism of its clandestine networks. "They've tripped up more than usual recently," said one well-placed official, "but it's not surprising that water has fallen from the top of the iceberg because the iceberg is very large."

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Iran: Commentary Criticizes Turkey's 'Anti-Iranian' Stand

NC2403151096 Mashhad KHORASAN in Persian 14 Mar 96 pp 1, 11

[Unattributed political commentary: "Turkey Is Lending Bread to the Zionist Regime!"]

[FBIS Translated Text] In tandem with the martyrdom-seeking operations by the Islamic Resistance in occupied Palestine and the consecutive explosions in Israel, which rendered the Zionist regime helpless, coordinated and prolific propaganda has been started by Western media against the Islamic Republic of Iran.

As usual, the Turkish press, with its very close ties to Zionist circles, has become the forerunner in this issue; and during the past week, HURRIYET and CUMHURIYET newspapers in Turkey, which have a long history of reflecting news compiled by the Mosad, have published lies only useful to the hirelings of Israel and America. And, according to them, they have unveiled a link between Iranian diplomats and Turkish terrorists!! In its program on Tuesday [12 March] night, the Zionist regime's radio extensively cited these false reports from these newspapers and thus exacerbated the "atmosphere." According to this radio, the leader of an Islamic group in Turkey, considered to be a branch of the Iranian Hezbollah, confessed after his arrest that he had close relations with the Iranian rule. This person has been accused of having assassinated two secularist journalists.

The publication of the news, which the Zionist regime wants in the Turkish press, and the repetition of these reports by the Zionist radio shows that the two pillars of secularism and Zionism in the Middle East are lending bread to each other!!

It is not without reason then that in the midst of all this commotion, Turkish President Suleyman Demirel pays a four-day visit to Israel and the occupied territories of Palestine. This visit is of importance in that Demirel is the first Turkish president to visit the occupied territories of Palestine. Of course, Turkish Prime Minister Tansu Ciller visited Israel two years ago.

Meanwhile, the convening of the so-called anti-terrorism conference in Egypt's Sharm al-Shaykh has complemented all the anti-Iranian propaganda. The experience of the past few years has shown that in times of crisis, the Zionists have always sought the Turkish secularists' assistance and vice versa!

On the international level, even in Turkey's dispute with Iraq and Syria over water resources, the Zionist regime sided with Turkey; and in Turkey's haggling over its entry into the European Union, Israel has acted as one of Turkey's supporters in talks with the European Union members.

The Zionists' satisfaction over the Muslims not coming to power in Turkey stems from the fact that the main objective behind every action is to prevent the growth of Islam in the region, forgetting that the raging wave of Islam has swept aside borders in the Middle East, Africa, Asia, and America, and that the call of the

Islamic Revolution is being answered in all parts of the world.

The above is exactly where we stand vis-a-vis the political array of forces on the international scene.

Iran: Daily Attacks Turkish Allegations Against Iranian Diplomats

LD2203162896 Tehran IRAN in Persian 16 Mar 96 p 1

[Editorial article: "Endless Western Allegations"]

[FBIS Translated Text] In most countries of the world the press plays a decisive role in the establishment and survival of democracy. The press can also influence public opinion and can encourage the people to take part in political activities. Therefore, in these countries, journalists and intellectuals play a very significant role. Unfortunately, in some societies the press, journalists, and pen-pushers, for various reasons, sell themselves to the politicians or make extra income by covertly cooperating with the intelligence service of the ruling regimes or foreign powers.

Some of the press in Turkey and a number of Turkish dailies are clear examples of an unhealthy and subservient press. These dailies, in addition to promoting moral corruption, decadence, and lumpenism [preceding word published in English] show no respect for press credibility, justice, and the independence of the press.

Among the common features of these dailies one can mention chaotic reporting, sensationalism, calumny, and slander. These affiliated dailies and their unprofessional journalists are trying to imitate the crude Western allegations.

In the latest of the Turkish press allegations, known in journalistic circles as a press sell-out, two newspapers which are printed in Turkey coordinated in printing pictures, names, and addresses of Iranian Embassy employees. The dailies also printed certain immoral and unsubstantiated allegations against Iranian Embassy staff and other employees of the Iranian representative offices in Turkey.

Such baseless claims by the Turkish press will not help the two neighboring countries and will pave the way for the greater infiltration of Zionists in the region. This clumsy move, which seems to have taken place in accordance with instructions from some foreign intelligence services and sponsored by them, adds another sinister page to the file of the affiliated press in Turkey.

The cultural and journalistic circles in Iran expect independent Turkish journalists, who are the majority in Turkey, to condemn such biased moves and prevent further deterioration of the Turkish press credibility. The Turkish Government itself enjoys fraternal and friendly relations with Iran. We therefore expect that the Government of Turkey will, through timely and appropriate reaction, once and for all save the two countries' sensitive political, economic, and cultural ties from the domination of foreign powers. Such a step would significantly improve the two countries' relations and might even eliminate Turkey from the list of those countries which have imprisoned the highest number of writers and journalists.

Iran: Radio Calls On Turkey To Improve Rights of Turkish Kurds

LD2203171696 Tehran Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran in English 1130 GMT 22 Mar 96

[Station commentary]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Turkey's Premier Mesut Yilmaz promised on 21 March he would solve the issues related to the Turkish Kurds as soon as possible, preserving the territorial integrity of Turkey. As the first step in this regard, Yilmaz has issued an order to lift the ban on the teaching of the Kurdish language at schools in various Kurdish-inhabited regions of Turkey.

According to political analysts, such a measure by the premier of Turkey is, in fact, indicative of the reality that after years of futile wars, the government of Mr. Yilmaz has realized the question of Turkey's Kurds cannot be solved through military means. Therefore, for the resumption of development in cultural operations, measures had to be taken in order to win people's reliance on the government policy. Lifting the ban on the teaching of the Kurdish language is, in fact, a preliminary but basic measure.

Regional analysts believe that this measure can be effective if the government of Turkey keeps on taking other steps as soon as possible. Creating jobs and improving the economy in the Kurdish-populated regions of Turkey are some significant steps to which the government of Yilmaz can pay due attention in the later stages. In fact, provision of social and individual rights of the Turkish Kurds and improving their economic situation will actually isolate the separatist groups which believe in armed struggle.

The Turkish Government can be hopeful about the establishment of peace and tranquillity in the country if it can take more and more constructive measures for the improvement of the social and political situation.

Informed observers say that it seems that the government of Yilmaz has adopted a new policy in two different directions. On the one hand, it attempts to recognize the rights of the Kurds and pave the ground for the removal of the past misunderstanding, and on the other, it stresses confrontation with the separatists and extremist groups, and in this manner, emphasizes the territorial integrity of Turkey.

Iran: Syrian Envoy Denies Official Involvment in Berlin Bombings

LD2403104596 Tehran IRNA in English
0904 GMT 24 Mar 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Tehran, March 24, IRNA — Syrian Ambassdor to Tehran Ahmad al-Hasan Sunday [24 March] termed as unreal claim made by the Berlin prosecutor's office on involvement of two Syrian officials in the Berlin bombings in 1980s and considered it as an attempt by the Zionist regime to press Syria.

Speaking to IRNA, the ambassador said following the recent Sharm al-Shaykh summit in Egypt, the Israeli intelligence agency, Mosad, has been missioned to embark on measures in collaboration with Zionists residing in western countries, to defame countries such as Syria and Iran.

The Syrian diplomat regarded the accusation as an attempt by the Zionist regime to justify the Zionists withdrawal from talks with Syria and to exert pressure on Damascus to gain concessions.

"Another objective of the Zionist regime is to exert pressure on groups which Israel calls them terrorist but we consider them groups opposing the peace desired by the Zionist regime," al-Hassan added.

The German news agency, quoting the weekly DER SPIEGEL reported that Berlin prosecutor's office is seeking two top-ranking Syrians on suspicions of being linked to two bomb attacks in Berlin in the 1980s.

DER SPIEGEL identified the two persons as Heitham Said, head of the secret service of the Syrian Air Force and a close aide to Syrian President Hafiz al—Asad and Feisal Sammak, former Syrian ambassador to East Germany.

Iran: Editorial on Opposition Interpretation of Election Results

LD2303222496 Tehran RESALAT in Persian
16 Mar 96 pp 1-2

[Editorial by Bizhan Moqaddam: "A Point Made in Haste!"]

[FBIS Translated Text] The Organization of the Mojahedin of the Islamic Revolution have issued a statement, happily conveying their "felicitations" to the nation for the breaking of the "monopoly" and the transformation of the "majority" faction of the Majles into the "minority" and describing it as a "victory"!

The statement says: "Our organization wants to do its share in expressing its felicitations to the Muslim and vigilant nation of Iran for this victory"!! (Footnote 1) (SALAM, Wednesday 13 March, 1996)

First of all, it is not clear what all this dancing for joy is for. How is victory described in this regard, and what share did that organization have in this so-called victory? (Footnote 2) (It is worth noting that from the candidates belonging specifically to the Organization of the Mojahedin of the Islamic Revolution — the names of whom have only been included in the list of "coalition of groups in the line of the Imam" and who have not been selected by any other group — 14 have been eliminated and did not even obtain enough votes to go through to the second round, and that organization's influential members are currently number 40 or less. People such as 'Abdollah Nuri, Sarhadizadeh, Ansari, Mo'in and Khaleqi are people whose names appeared among the candidates of other groups such as the Servants or Society for the Defense of Values, and they cannot be viewed as candidates belonging specifically to that organization or even to the coalition of the line of the Imam.)

Basically, in this kind of competition, the victors are the ones who, should they win the people's vote, do not return to old matters but propose new things. If they have put forward "slogans" (Footnote 3) (ASR-E MA number 37, election statement number 7) against a quest for monopoly, they should not "in practice" seek monopoly and be dictatorial themselves. They should believe in freedom and democracy in their true sense, and they should not let "desks" and "responsibility" alter their basic viewpoints.

If an organization, on the one hand, accuses its rival group of questing for monopoly and trying to gain power and, on the other hand, one of its main influential members announces: We, too, tried to achieve a monopoly when we were in power and, if we come to power again, we may do the same once more — would the hypothetical success of the group demand a message of felicitations of this nature?

Please note the following sentences which were uttered with great sincerity by one of the main members of the said organization before the elections.

"We do not criticize the gentlemen or ask them why they want a 'monopoly of power,' because we ourselves try to achieve 'power' and any sector of the population behaves in this same way. Of course, it may be that things are different sitting on this side of the desk or on that side. In other words, it may be that, when we are on the other side of the 'desk', we may again become 'dictatorial', just as we may have been in the past. I accept myself that, when we had more power, we were more 'dictatorial' in spirit." (Footnote 4) (Behzad Nabavi, SOBH, number 42, 30 January, 1996)

The question is this: With this interpretation of "responsibility and power," should our knowledgeable and vigilant people be happy or anxious at the prospect of rule by this group?

Unfortunately, the people who issued the statement being discussed took a leaf out of the book of the author of "The Way Things Are" and were equally unable to do the simplest calculations. Their joy, too, is more than anything a result of their inept calculations.

This is because it has taken the list of "only" one of the groups allied to the Militant Clergy Association [ruhaniyat] of Tehran as the main list of the majority faction and issued the decree on this basis that: "Only 41 people from this group have found their way to the Majles and the majority dominating the fourth term of the Majles has been reduced to a 'minority'."

Fortunately, this kind of assessment made in haste usually does not endure very long, and their nature becomes clear to the people in a short time. And this kind of propaganda will affect neither the amount of votes put into ballot boxes nor have any impact on the votes cast by our faithful people in the second round of the elections.

It is clear that the news was "constructed" even before the election and, even afterwards, was designed and published on the basis of the propaganda technique known as "suggestion." On the basis of this technique, there is no need for any correspondence between the statements made and actual realities; the main "desired and ideal" aim is rather the picture that is presented of reality and not the external facts themselves. The most significant point made in the said statement is the message of felicitation; a message suggesting in appearance the victory of "Islam over blasphemy".

If we accept the inexpert analysis of you gentlemen, what interpretation do we have to put on the fact that a large number of the "Muslim and vigilant people of Iran" voted for candidates from your rival group and to whom should we deliver the felicitations? And, if the composition of the fifth term of the Majles is contrary in nature to the optimistic analysis of the gentlemen, what kind of message should be written and published then? Felicitations, condolences, or silence?

Iran: Editorial Questions Election Campaign Price

LD2403162196 Tehran KEYHAN in Persian 16 Mar pp 2, 16

[Editoral article: "Necessity of Investigation"]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] Yesterday the wise leader of the revolution sent a message to the nation thanking them for their far-reaching presence at the elections and praised the revolutionary movement of the Iranians who as an "alert, particular people know their enemy" held the biggest elections since the [1979] revolution on 8 March. All evidence and signs indicate that the recent elections were healthy and dignified and that the related centers had managed their responsibilities properly. However in yesterday's message, the great leader of the revolution also referred to an issue that must be carefully pursued. At the end of the message his excellency said:

"Relevant officials are duty bound to investigate meticulously reports indicating a lack of care in certain campaign expenditures and if, God Forbid, in introducing candidates some have stooped to indiscriminate spending of money and purloining from the public purse, take then to revenant authorities for prosecution and report the results to me."

There is evidence that there had been "purloining from the public purse" during the campaign and advertising of the candidates; and this state of affairs has invoked this question for the public that where did the high expenditure for these extensive campaigns come from? As the wise leader of the revolution stressed the relevant officials are responsible for this investigation and they must explain these questions to the people and they must explain how the high expenditure for campaigning was provided? [passage omitted]

Iran: Paper Says Ministerial Positions Not To Be Used for Elections

LD2203160896 Tehran RESALAT in Persian 17 Mar 96 p 16

[Unattributed article: "A bad precedent!"]

[FBIS Translated Text] If certain offenses take place in elections, then everyone must try to address them. It is noted in this connection that a group of ministers and other executive officials planned to fill the Majles with deputies that they favor. This was a wrong move which unfortunately could set a precedent.

God willing, the move was started with good intentions at heart, and thanks to the guidelines of the eminent leader [Khamene'i] and other key personalities, and also due to the expression of certain views by other caring circles, the move was halted at the level of ministers.

However, after these elections this trend must be stopped completely, once and for all. This is because if Servants [Kargozaran] want deputies of the legislative body to be elected from among those whom they favor and support, then the independence of the legislative power will be all but destroyed. Subsequently, the independence of the judiciary will also be undermined and then the whole concept of the separation of state powers will be rendered meaningless.

In other words, "elections" will no longer have any meaning, because the people will no longer "select" the deputies. Instead, they will merely "vote" for them while the actual selection would be already carried out by a governmental entity. Deputies who enter the Majles through reliance on the support of the executive power, benefiting from this power's means and facilities, will not be "the representatives of the nation", but will instead be the representatives of those Servants. In this way, the whole philosophy of representing the nation will become null and void.

What is clear is that individuals, groups, and organizations cannot compete with the government's might and its many means and facilities. For instance, a municipality has the following means at its disposal: the refuse collection system, taxi and bus networks, and also control over local administrations in the city's boroughs and districts. It also has authority to put pressure on shopkeepers, companies, and building contractors. So, if a municipality wishes to support certain candidates, who could compete with it and overcome its might?

On the other hand, the executive power and its officials should consider themselves as the people's elected representatives, so that they retain their popular base. If they themselves send deputies to the Majles, their popular base will be undermined, because then they will be selected to their posts by a Majles that they themselves elected in the first place, in other words, by a group of Majles deputies who no longer enjoy the characteristic of being elected by people.

Therefore, regardless of the fact that what happened in these elections and whether the "Servants of Construction" candidates got any votes or not, what is important is that in the future the Servants should refrain from seeking to send deputies to Majles.

If there are people among the Servants who want to be active in Majles affairs, then it is better that they should become members of a nongovernmental organization. According to the Constitution, officials from the executive and judicial powers are not allowed to run as Majles candidates unless they resign from their posts before the elections. This shows that there is a clear boundary drawn between the three state powers, and everyone should strictly observe this boundary.

Iran: Mojahedin Protests Division of Nuri Election Votes

LD2303120096 Tehran ASR-E MA in Persian 17 Mar 96 p8

[FBIS Translated Text] TO: The honorable office of the governor of Tehran.

SUBJECT: Protest to the way that votes for His Excellency Hojjat ol-Eslam val-Moslemin Abdollah Nuri, the organization's candidate, were counted.

Greetings,

With reference to Article 67 of the parliamentary election law, it is hereby brought to your attention that His Excellency Hojjat ol-Eslam val-Moslemin 'Ali Akbar Nateq-Nuri has stated that he is also known as "Nuri," and therefore votes for our organization's candidate, Hojjat ol-Eslam Nuri, which did not have the first name of the candidate but only the family name, have been divided in equal parts between the two candidates.

Since His Excellency Nateq-Nuri is not generally known in Tehran as "Nuri," the aforementioned act is a clear violation of the rights of the organization's candidate and could come under Note 9 of Article 65 of the Election Law.

The Organization of the Mojahedin of the Islamic Revolution insists on a revision on the aforementioned decision and the recounting of the votes of the two candidates.

[Signed] Organization of the Mojehedin of the Islamic Revolution

Copies to the following, for information and subsequent action:

1. The Central Supervisory Election Committee affiliated with the honorable Guardian's Council;

2. the special inspectorate of the president.

Iran: KDP Radio Reports PUK Shelling

LD2403172196 Tehran IRNA in English 1319 GMT 24 Mar 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Sanandaj, Kurdestan Prov., March 24, IRNA — Forces loyal to the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) shelled positions of the rival group, Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) in Shilaneh and

Kalavqasem districts in Iraqi Kurdistan over the past two days.

KDP radio, monitored in this western Iranian city on Sunday [24 March], reported that PUK forces had shelled the areas under control of the KDP troops with semi-heavy arms, inflicting damage on farmlands.

The radio called the attacks a "blatant" violation of ceasefire and as an effort to fan the flames of war in Iraqi Kurdistan.

The radio did not make any mention to any possible casualties.

Iran: Student Association on Emergence of 'Secularism'

LD2303150296 Tehran ASR-E MA in Persian 17 Mar 96 p1

[FBIS Translated Text] Following the theft of a bulletin board at the Sharif Industrial University, on which free ideas were expressed, the Islamic Association of Students at the university published a statement defending legitimate and constitutional freedoms.

The statement says: unfortunately a way of thinking has been taking form in the past several years which has roots in a superficial understanding of religion, which is devoid of religious spirit and essence, which pays no attention to logic or reason, and which tends to be reactionary and violent. This tendency is dominant in our society; is totally irrational and illogical; views all others as atheists and infidels; portrays an inverted and ugly image of the sacred revolution and religion; frightens weak elements from the revolution and religion; and cooperates with the enemy in portraying a confused image of system.

Sadly, one must say that one of the main reasons for the emergence of "secularism" and "lack of religion" in the present circumstances is the wrong notion of religion that has been imposed on the people by this tendency. This tendency brands all free things as "liberalism," and tries to damage the principles of freedom and republicanism by limiting freedoms specified in the Constitution and by limiting the process by which the popular will is exercised. This tendency, which is a facile game played by professional political activists, puts on a show of force at the beginning of all popular elections. On this basis, the Islamic Association of Students at the Industrial University of Sharif believes that this type of thinking is a great danger to the revolution and the system. The life of a society depends on its intellectual life, and the spread of practices which destroy thinking also destroy hope in life and hope in society's intellectual dynamism.

The Islamic Association adds that the free-column bulletin board, the "Mirror of Ideas," was a healthy way of exchanging ideas, and its futile and lowly theft is strongly condemned.

Nepal

Nepal: Hectic Political Activity Ahead of No-Confidence Motion

LD2303115496 Delhi All India Radio General Overseas Service in English 1000 GMT 23 Mar 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] The Nepal Parliament continues debate on the no-confidence motion against the six month old coalition government. The motion, moved in the lower house yesterday by the leader of the Communist Party of Nepal-UML [Unified Marxist-Leninist], Mr. Man Mohan Adhikari, is expected to be put to vote tomorrow.

Meanwhile, hectic political activity continues in the capital, Kathmandu, as both the communists and the coalition partners are trying hard to strengthen their positions. The communists require 103 votes to oust the government, but their strength in the house of 205 is 88. The government received a setback with the resignation by five ministers belonging to the Rashtriya Prajatantra Party, a major coalition partner.

Nepal: Opposition Fails To Win Support for No-Confidence Motion

BK2403113096 Hong Kong AFP in English 1116 GMT 24 Mar 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Kathmandu, March 24 (AFP) — The main opposition Nepal Communist Party-United Marxist and Leninist (NCP-UML) failed Sunday [24 March] to overthrow the government in a no-confidence vote, a parliamentary official said.

The NCP-UML managed only 90 votes for the motion while the coalition government won 106, the official said. Nepal's constitution says a party must get 103 votes to overthrow a government.

The coalition partners are the Nepali Congress (NC), the rightist Rastriya Prajatantra Party (RPP) and the pro-India Nepal Sadbhavana Party (NSP).

The NCP-UML were certain to lose the vote after the pro-Maoist Nepal Workers' and Peasants' Party (NWPP) Sunday decided not to support the motion and remain "neutral." It was further jolted by the last minute decision by a group of dissident MPs from the RPP not to back the vote.

The NWPP had termed the NCP-UML a "bourgeois party" saying it did not consult them over the motion.

"The decision of the NWPP shocked the NCP-UML because it was hoping to topple the government with its help," political analyst H. C. Shrestha said.

Although small the NWPP holds the key to the present power equation in the house with four parliamentary seats. But relations between it and the NCP-UML have been strained following the defection of four NWPP MPs to the communists.

Lokendra Bahadur Chand, RPP MP and leader of seven extreme right dissident lawmakers, had said as late as Friday that his group would vote with the NCP-UML.

King Birendra had met Chand on Friday to ask him to help resolve the political problem, but the former premier said he stood by the NCP-UML, which had promised him the prime minister's post if it won. "The Chand group's decision was a setback for the NCP-UML and it came as a big surprise to them ... as everything had been decided" beforehand, NC activist S. Man Baidya said.

"It seems the Chand faction knew the motion would be defeated after sensing the NWPP would abstain from voting on the motion and to save face, it decided to back out," Baidya said. Chand was conspicously absent during the voting on Sunday.

The RPP, which has a total 19 MPs, is split into two factions led by Chand and RPP President and MP Surya Bahadur Thapa. Thapa's group supports the present government.

The tri-partite coalition government was formed on September 12 after it combined to overthrow a 10-month-old NCP-UML government through a no-confidence motion two days earlier. The 1994 general elections resulted in a hung parliament in which the NCP-UML got 88 seats, the NC 83, the RPP 20, the NWPP 4 and the NSP 3, and the rest went to a communist faction and independents.

Nepal: Government Survives No-Confidence Vote

LD2403152496 Kathmandu Radio Nepal in English 1415 GMT 24 Mar 96

[FBIS Transcribed Excerpt] The special session of the House of Representatives today rejected the no-confidence motion tabled by the main opposition party, the CPN-UML [Communist Party of Nepal-Unified (Marxist Leninist)] by 106 votes to 90. [passage omitted]

Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba has said that a people's representative should not forget one's position. Prime Minister Deuba made this remark in reply to a remark made by the MP [as heard] during discussions on the no-trust motion tabled by the CPN-UML against him at the House of Representatives today. In a democratic system the people are sovereign, the prime minister said, (?and the) prime minister is only a representative of the people. [passage omitted]

Mr. Deuba expressed the hope that cooperation will be received from friends in the opposition to put into practice the tradition of honoring and respecting the decision of the parliament elected by the people. In a democracy the majority definitely rules, but the participation of the minority is also meaningful, Mr. Deuba said, adding that he had agreed to sit across the table with the opposition to resolve problems, no matter how minute they were. [passage omitted]

Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba has earnestly appealed to all political parties to move forward towards national consensus and (?reconciliation) in order to lead the party [as heard] join the path of democratic stability and national development. Prime Minister Deuba made this appeal in a statement this afternoon after the special session of the House of Representatives rejected the [words indistinct — no-confidence motion] tabled by the main opposition party, the CPN-UML. Prime Minister Deuba said that the coalition government of the Nepali Congress, Rashtriya Prajatantra Party and the Nepal Sadbhavana Party led by him was ever-ready to solve all problems through talks and negotiations.

Speaker Ram Chandra Poudel read out a letter intimating that the special session of the House of Representatives had been prorogued at 7 p.m. today [1315 GMT].

Nepal: RPP Issues Statement on Talks With King

BK2403110896 Kathmandu THE KATHMANDU POST in English 23 Mar 96

[Unattributed report — received via Internet]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Kathmandu, March 22 — A press statement issued today by RPP [Rastriya Prajatantra Party] leader Lokendra Bahadur Chand, after his audience with the King, has attracted strong reactions within the Party even when efforts are on to unitedly take the party ahead.

Party secretary general Rabindra Nath Sharma when asked to comment on the statement by the Kathmandu Post, criticised Chand's statement saying the statement had dragged the constitutional monarch into politics just to misinform party workers that he was working according to the King's wish.

In his statement, faxed to the Kathmandu Post this evening, Chand has mentioned that he met the monarch in his capacity as the parliamentary leader of the RPP and explained to him the current political situation of the country, his party's point of view and decisions taken by them. The statement further says, the King said the inter-party issues should be settled among parties. The King stressed that political activities of the parties should, within the bounds of the constitution, be directed for national interest.

Sharma said there is no precedence of issuing a press statement after meeting the King.

"Such statement may not be compatible with the regard and respect we have towards monarchy."

Sharma expressed ignorance about the resignations by five ministers—Padma Sundar Lawati, Kamal Thapa, Ram Krishna Acharya, Prem Bahadur Bhandari and Rajiv Parajuli. When informed that Minister Kamal Thapa had told the press about the resignation, Sharma said it was an irresponsible act and that it was against democratic norms. "They were appointed by the RPP to become ministers and should have consulted the party," he said.

RPP central committee member Ganesh Sherchan told The Kathmandu Post that the resignations were handed over to the Prime Minister at 8:30 am this morning.

Nepal: Ministers Reportedly Resign During No-Confidence Debate

BK2403111996 Kathmandu THE KATHMANDU POST in English 23 Mar 96

[Unattributed report — received via Internet]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Kathmandu, March 22 — The House discussion on the no-trust move against the government were disturbed for nearly an hour today following constant queries by opposition MPs whether some ministers had resigned.

UML's [United Marxist Leninists] Siddhilal Singh intervened the Speaker immediately after the latter's ruling to open the debate, saying that he heard reports through international wires that five cabinet members had resigned. "We want answers if this is true," Singh said.

He was yet to receive reply from the Speaker when Birodh Khatiwada, another UML legislator, raised his hand and complemented the same question.

"Dear MPs, resignations undergo their own processes, you must be aware of that... we don't have to react just on hearing something," Speaker Ram Chandra Poudel said.

After about five minutes' wrangling, opposition leader Manmohan Adhikari began to speak. But the speech was disturbed owing to mike failure. The House had to be adjourned for half an hour to maintain the sound system.

Later, when Adhikari finished his speech, UML's KP Oli, Devi Ojha, Bharat Mohan Adhikari, Jhalanath Khanal, Padma Ratna Tuladhar and a number of other MPs again created a din, demanding the prime minister's specific reply to the query.

Speaker Poudel later said the Prime Minister did not think the question deserved any answer from him at the moment.

UML MPs insisted that if the ministers had resigned, then the government shall be deemed as minority. But the ruling bench MPs denied this.

UML MPs said they received reports that Ministers Kamal Thapa and Padma Sundar Lawati, Minister of State Ram Krishna Acharya and Assistant Ministers Rajiv Parajuli and Prem Bahadur Bhandari had resigned earlier in the day. Although the resignations were not confirmed officially, Minister Thapa, in a brief encounter to reporters, admitted to having tendered his resignation to the PM earlier today.

Nepal: Party Leader Criticizes CPN-UML for Undermining RPP

BK2403110296 Kathmandu THE KATHMANDU POST in English 24 Mar 96

[Unattributed report — received via Internet]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Kathmandu, March 23 — The Rastriya Prajatantra Party (RPP) president Surya Bahadur Thapa today lashed out at the opposition communist party CPN-UML [Communist Party of Nepal-United Marxist Leninists], alleging that it had "seriously undermined" his party by instigating some individual members of RPP against the government.

In his sharp-worded remarks against the UML-moved censure motion against the government during a discussion session in the House, Thapa termed as "undemocratic" and "unethical" the UML's soliciting for alliance with a group in RPP without his notice.

"It is very sad, and insulting to us, that a party like UML should try to interfere with our integrity," he said, alleging that the censure motion was UML's plot to divide RPP. "It's a shameful, ignominious move that seeks to challenge political stability; it is also vengeful against the Supreme Court's verdict last October that made them lose the power," he added.

Thapa said the present coalition was a product of RPP's sincere commitment for political stability in the country and added that this commitment would continue even in the days ahead. Noting that his party's view on UML were reflected already during the last session of the House as well as in the writ petition it filed against the House dissolution by the UML government, Thapa said UML's bid to shake the coalition was a demonstration of its own weaknesses and ill-will.

Saturday's debate over the no-trust move continued till 6 pm, with MPs from both ruling and the opposition benches speaking for and against the motion.

UML leader Chandra Prakash Mainali and NC's [Nepali Congress] Ms Shailaja Acharya pointed out the fact that failure of the forces that led the 1990 movement for democracy (ie NC and the left forces) to work for meeting a minimum of people's needs was mainly responsible for the present political confusion.

"We should rise above narrow lines of immediate political gains and look out rather consciously for a more sustainable and politically correct terms of reference while forging alliance," Ms Acharya said. "Short-term political equations may be sweet for time being but they won't work for long."

Mainali said political equation between the forces of the Popular Movement was the need of the hour. "Failure of mainstream political parties (NC and UML) to respect popular sentiment had dragged a section of people towards extreme political recourse," he said. Obviously, he was hinting at the Maoist communist groups who were waging violent political moves in different parts of the country since last month.

Mainali, however, supported the censure motion, saying that the government's mismanagement deserved this.

Congress MP Mani Lama, however, argued that the coalition government had no alternative at present.

"Forming another coalition to replace the existing one cannot be a proper solution," he said. "And a mid-term poll could be even worse than that."

Lama also urged UML to withdraw the censure motion as a goodwill gesture for inspiring a politics that works with a broader, national outlook in the coming days.

The House debate over the motion concluded today. Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba will furnish his replies to the charges levelled against him, on Sunday. Voting on the no-trust motion will also take place Sunday afternoon.

Nepal: Opposition Introduces No-Confidence Motion in Parliament

BK2403111096 Kathmandu THE KATHMANDU POST in English 23 Mar 96

[Unattributed report — received via Internet]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Kathmandu, March 22 — Opposition leader Manmohan Adhikari formally tabled the no-trust move against the coalition government led by Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba in the Lower House today.

Levying a volley of charges against the six-month-old government, the CPN-UML [Communist Party of Nepal-United Marxist Leninists] leader said Deuba government deserved "to be overthrown" because it had done nothing for the country's progress.

Adhikari and his 87 parliamentary colleagues had filed the no-trust motion at the Parliament Secretariat March 12 after making a submission to His Majesty the King the previous day (March 11) to convene a special session to discuss the censure motion.

Accordingly, His Majesty the King called the special session on Wednesday where Adhikari apprised the House of the reasons for calling the session. The charges the UML leader levelled against the Deuba cabinet ranged from gross financial indiscipline and soaring price rise of essential commodities to violations of human rights, disturbance in law and order, and diplomatic failure to maintain balance in foreign policy.

Calling his own prime ministerial tenure as remarkable in economic, political as well as development front, Adhikari said the coalition government had not only cancelled UML's several development programmes like Build Your Village Yourselves (BYVY) and Nau Sa, but also ruined the bases of development set up by it.

"The Deuba government in its nearly 7 months in office has shown that it is inefficient, motionless and directionless, and people have been despaired by its unstable policy," Adhikari said. He urged the lawmakers to vote in favour of the censure motion because "to allow this government to carry on any further would only plunge the country into deeper crisis."

A number of UML MPs raised their arguments in Adhikari's support, while MPs from the ruling bench said the censure motion was "irrelevant" and "out of context." The leading supporters of the motion were former Home Minister KP Oli and former finance minister Bharat Mohan Adhikari of the UML, whereas Mahantha Thakur and Surendra Prasad Chaudhary of the Nepali Congress said the motion would serve the anti-democratic forces.

MP Mahantha Thakur said the way the censure motion was tabled suggested that the opposition did not have faith in democracy. Likewise, MP Surendra Prasad Chaudhary argued that the motion was directed against the system rather than the coalition government. He claimed that the charges against thegovernment were baseless and urged the MPs to vote against the move.

Discussion on the no-trust move against the government will continue in the House tomorrow.

Pakistan

Pakistan: President Leghari Addresses Military Parade

BK2303090996 Islamabad PTV Television Network in Urdu 0420 GMT 23 Mar 96

[Speech by President Farooq Ahmad Khan Leghari at the joint services parade on Jinnah Avenue in Islamabad marking Pakistan Day — live]

[FBIS Translated Text] Parade Commander Brigadier Navid Nasar, officers, junior commissioned officers, valiant troops, distinguished guests, and my dear countrymen: Peace be upon you.

This grand parade of the armed forces being held on the occasion of Pakistan Day is an expression of the starting point of our independence, commemorating the day when the Muslims of the subcontinent demanded the establishment of a separate homeland. Due to the inspiring and sincere leadership of Father of the Nation Hazrat Mohammad Ali Jinnah, we succeeded in establishing a separate independent state for ourselves within the short period of seven years. The glowing faces of the valiant officers, gallant commanders, and proud troops who are taking part in this parade serve as a tribute to our elders, who made selfless sacrifices with their lives and property to bring about the nation of Pakistan. Your alertness, preparedness, and high professional skills surely give us a sense of satisfaction, comfort, and pride, leading us to feel that the defense of our beloved motherland is in the hands of stalwart people full of self-respect who will wholeheartedly defend this invaluable boon of independence by making the biggest possible sacrifice.

My dear countrymen, we have achieved this independence after a prolonged struggle and by offering the sacrifices of valuable lives. This independence did not involve merely the establishment of a motherland; the intention was also to promote an ideology that said we should not only live our lives on this territory with complete religious freedom but should also march forward on a par with the developed countries of the world by blending our economic, political, social, and cultural values with our national mainstream.

The 50 years of our national life have witnessed all kinds of ups and downs; they include successes as well as failures. However, it is due to the great blessing of God, the most compassionate, that our successes far outweigh our failures. Nations face crises in their lives, but only those nations succeed and rise up in the world that keep themselves constantly ready to deal with those crises. This alertness of ours and our national attitude can guarantee our success.

Democracy flourishes in the country today. Political stability and economic prosperity are continuing on parallel lines. People are optimistic about their future. National organizations are taking root. Improvement is being witnessed in every walk of life. However, should we remain content with only this or should we continue a wholehearted and intense struggle to move further forward? We have to work harder to enter the 21st century and must prefer national interests over personal ones. In order to maintain our prosperity, it is necessary for us to pay wholehearted attention to the problems that might act as obstacles to our progress and prosperity. For its part, the government is striving to its fullest capacity to solve these problems; however, we, as a nation, have to play our individual roles in these efforts.

You know, the population problem is directly confronting us, and unemployment is a problem that is forcing the educated youth to work against the national mainstream. Foreign hands are wholeheartedly engaged in manipulating the youth to fulfill their nefarious designs and shatter our national unity. We have to foil the attempts of our enemies, which is possible only when we show complete unity and integrity in our ranks.

My dear countrymen, viewed from the geographic and political angles, Pakistan is located in a region that has its own acknowledged importance. The developments that have taken place in this region during the past few years have increased our importance manifold. Following the independence achieved by the Central Asian States, we face new economic and defense fronts. Our enemies do not want to see us succeed on these fronts. We have to fight this battle, and success is ensured only if the entire nation rises as one to face the situation. We do not want to gain the ascendancy vis-a-vis anyone in the defense field, but at the same time we cannot leave our national defense at the mercy of others. In view of the dangerous designs of our enemies, we have the right to continue to fully strengthen our defense. The government, in spite of a lack of resources, gives topmost priority to this national issue and is sparing no effort to further strengthen the national defense.

Dear countrymen, Pakistan is a peace-loving country and does not want a confrontation with anyone. We have amply played our role for the promotion of world peace. Whether it be the issue of independence of Muslims in Kashmir, Palestine, or Bosnia, we have been always prepared to extend political, moral and material assistance to oppressed people everywhere. Our armed forces, while playing their fullest role under the UN peacekeeping missions in Congo, Somalia, Bosnia, Haiti, and in all those places where the world peace has been endangered, have not only gained worldwide recognition for their professional capabilities but have also enhanced Pakistan's reputation. We, however, can in no way remain aloof to our national interests. You and the entire Pakistani nation have to always remain alert and prepared for our defense.

Dear countrymen, lasting peace in our region is possible only when the Kashmir issue has been settled fairly in accordance with the UN resolutions. All of you are well aware that Kashmir is not a boundary dispute between two countries; it is an issue of fundamental human, political, and moral rights, which is still pending a solution due to India's obduracy and disregard of the UN resolutions. The brave and proud people of occupied Kashmir have been waging a war to regain their rights for many years now. We have always extended moral, political, and diplomatic assistance to them and taken care of their widows and orphans as far as possible and, God willing, we will continue to do so until they achieve the right of a plebiscite in accordance with the UN resolutions, which is the only acceptable solution for this issue, because this fundamental issue can never be solved by staging a so-called election drama in occupied Kashmir, talking to self-styled Kashmiri leaders, or erecting a fence between Azad Kashmir and occupied Kashmir. As all Pakistani leaders and political parties have the same principled stand on this important national issue, I hope and ask that they will all fully and actively demonstrate a consensus on our historic and principled stand so that the countless sacrifices and exemplary struggle of our Kashmiri brothers are soon crowned with success.

In closing, I congratulate the participants in today's parade on a magnificent parade and pray that God will provide more strength to our armed forces and the entire nation for the defense of our ideological and geographic frontiers.

Amen. Long live the armed forces! Long live Pakistan!

Pakistan: Pakistan Day Celebration in Kashmir Reported

BK2303140396 Islamabad PTV Television Network in English 1300 GMT 23 Mar 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] In occupied Kashmir, Pakistan Day was observed today with rejoicing as the day of solidarity with the people of Pakistan amid crippling protest strike against Indian negotiating team's talks with puppets. Pakistan flag was hoisted on house tops and other vantage points to mark the celebrations and rallies were held at various places at which it was stressed that the day's celebrations demonstrated the fact that the hearts of Pakistanis and Kashmiris throb in unison. PTV special correspondent, Ghulam Nabi Khayal, reports from New Delhi.

[Begin Khyal recording] Pakistan Day celebrations marked the day in Kashmir Saturday [23 March]. Groups of people in all the six districts across the valley raised pro-Pakistan slogans and hoisted Pakistan flags atop houses, shops, and lamp posts. The chairman of the Hurriyat Conference, Mirwaiz Umar Farooq, while congratulating people of Pakistan on this auspicious occasion reiterated that the conference was keen to create an atmosphere of peace and stability between India and Pakistan, provided Kashmir dispute was resolved in accordance with the wishes of the Kashmiris. Addressing Friday congregation in Srinagar, Mirwaiz asked how could the proposed elections help resolve the 50-year old problem when no such election in the past could prove helpful in this direction. He said the Indian Government was aiming at misleading world opinion by announcing holding of parliamentary elections in Jammu and Kashmir state. Meanwhile, several more fighters organizations have condemned some former militants for their holding talks with the Indian home minister in New Delhi last week. The outfits criticizing the meetings include Hizbul Mujahidin, Dukhtaran-i-Millet, Ikhwanul Muslimeen, Liberation Front, Al-Umar Mujahidin, People's League, and also Muslim Mujahidin. Ghulam Nabi Khayal, PTV News, New Delhi. [end recording]

Pakistan: Leghari Says Pakistan Believes in Nonproliferation

BK2203160196 Islamabad Radio Pakistan Network in English 0300 GMT 22 Mar 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] President Farooq Ahmad Khan Leghari has said Pakistan believes in nonproliferation and is ready to accept international safeguards for its peaceful nuclear program provided India also does so. Speaking at a banquet given in honor of the visiting president of Mauritius, Mr. Cassam Uteem, in Islamabad last night he urged the friendly countries to use their influence in persuading India to desist from the senseless and dangerous course. The president expressed the hope that Pakistan's friends will be able to bring meaningful pressure on India to agree to an early, peaceful solution of the Kashmir problem. He said on our part, Pakistan is willing for a meaningful dialogue with India to resolve the Kashmir dispute in accordance with the UN resolution.

Mr. Farooq Leghari said the dangerous consequences of the conflict in Kashmir have been aggravated by the Indian nuclear proliferation threat and missile development in the region. He pointed out that Pakistan did not introduce these threats to South Asia, but it was India which initiated arms race in the region and detonated a nuclear device in 1974. The president said there are highly credible and disturbing reports that India plans to carry out another nuclear test. These are ominous developments not only for Pakistan but for Africa and Middle East as well. India's missile program which is nuclear capable poses a direct and serious threat not only to Pakistan's security but to the whole region and the world.

On bilateral relations, the president said the bonds of friendship between the two countries would facilitate and accelerate growth of significant bilateral cooperation as regional partners. Pakistan will extend support to Mauritius in the fields of economic cooperation, communication, education, and other fields.

The visiting Mauritius president, Mr. Cassam Uteem, reciprocating President Leghari's sentiments expressed desire to strengthen economic ties with Pakistan. He said joint Pakistani-Mauritius ventures would be mutually profitable and further strengthen the economic ties between the two countries. Mr. Cassam Uteem hoped that direct air links between the two countries will contribute significantly to strengthen further economic and cultural ties between the two countries.

Pakistan: Bhutto—Kashmir Election 'Farce' Cannot Resolve Issue

BK2403113396 Islamabad Radio Pakistan Network in English 0500 GMT 24 Mar 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] The prime minister, Ms. Benazir Bhutto, has said Indian plans for holding election farce in occupied Kashmir would not help resolve the longstanding dispute for which it is imperative to hold a plebiscite. She was talking to the visiting vice president of Uganda, Dr. Mrs. Specioza Kazibwe, who called on the prime minister in Islamabad yesterday and delivered a message from the Ugandan president.

The prime minister said 600,000 Indian troops could not stop the struggle of Kashmiri people, which was continuing for the past seven years.

Pakistan: Commentary Views India's Concern Over U.S. Arms Supply

BK2503035796 Islamabad Radio Pakistan Network in English 1600 GMT 24 Mar 96

[Commentary by A.B.S. Jafri]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] After years of waiting in a [word indistinct] of diplomatic persuasion, the United States Government appears to be on the verge of releasing some arms supplies for which Pakistan has already paid in cash. The quantity of arms expected to be released is not much; the entire lot would be worth no more than a mere $368 million. By no scale of reckoning or stretch of imagination arms worth that amount would make any perceptible qualitative or quantitative differences to Pakistan's military strike capability.

In the first place, there is absolutely no new or fresh or unforeseen developments in this possibility of Pakistan receiving these arms. This order had been placed years ago, there was no secret about it. The value of the order was paid in advance, but some political developments on the international stage, some inside the United States, intervened and the issue of supply of arms already paid for got confused in the fog of controversy. Now that fog is clearing and the prospect of Pakistan getting what was its due becoming clearer and brighter. While the arms are still to be delivered and it may take months before the delivery materializes, New Delhi has put its anti-Pakistan propaganda juggernaut into the top gear. The noises made by the Indian publicists inside India and in the United States are so devoid of logic as to be downright ridiculous.

New Delhi's allegation that this quantity of U.S. made arms would upset what it calls the balance of power in the South Asian subcontinent is flawed from the beginning to the end. What India calls balance of power in South Asia is a typical oriental myth with no substance. Where is the balance of power? There is no balance of power and there cannot be any with the Indian military power being anything ranging from five to Pakistan's one, and India's 10 to Pakistan's one. It depends on whether you are assessing firepower or numbers of people under arms. There is no balance of power in South Asia. India has under its command power immensely more than warranted by its real security requirements. India is vastly more heavily armed than all its immediate neighbors put together. Pakistan, Nepal, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka cannot jointly muster military strength which would add up to India's half, be it in terms of land forces, the naval forces, and air force. Going by the number of the armed forces or their equipment and conventional firepower, India commands superiority over all its neighbors jointly as well as severally.

Another highly significant factor which backs up India's formidable warlike strength is India's military industrial complex. For most of its arms and ammunition, India has a gigantic backup industrial support. India has the capability to replace its equipment losses in battle almost instantly. We should also take a good look at the burgeoning nuclear capability of India. It exploded a nuclear weapons grade device a quarter of a century ago; it is certainly not been twiddling its thumbs since. Generally accepted estimates put India's nuclear arsenal at or in the vicinity of 200 Hiroshima-grade bombs.

Over the recent years, India has been working overtime on developing and deploying ballistic missiles. It already possess the medium-range Pakistan-specific Prithvi missile with the range of 250 kilometers capable of targeting any major center in Pakistan. The Agni missile of India is reputed to have a range of 2,500 km. This means any target within 2,500 kilometers of any part of India can be targeted. This takes within its range, the whole of Southeast Asia, Indian Ocean, East African coast, the Middle East, and Central Asia, and of course a good part of South China. This in brief is the portrait of present-day India and its offensive military capability. It must be noted and kept in mind that for most of its defense needs, including nuclear weapons and ballistic delivery system, India is now self-supporting.

In this context, U.S. arms worth $368 million is less than a drop in the ocean. And yet the hue and cry kicked up by India is not only so deafening but absurd reflecting either feeble thought process or a sense of fear bordering on phobia. Right now with elections round the corner, momentary political considerations may also be making a slight difference. But such noises are now a part of India's psyche.

Pakistan: Bhutto Expresses Concern Over Nuclear Threat in Region

BK2503064696 Islamabad Radio Pakistan Network in English 0300 GMT 25 Mar 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] The prime minister has expressed concern over the nuclear threat in the region which has multiplied the existing dangerous situation due to the Kashmir conflict. Addressing a banquet in honor of President Cassam Uteem of Mauritius and the Ugandan vice president, Dr. Specioza W. Kazibwe, Ms. Benazir Bhutto recalled Pakistan's repeated proposals to seek equitable and nondiscriminatory ways to promote nonproliferation in the region. The prime minister said Pakistan's numerous calls to India to enter into a meaningful dialogue to resolve the Kashmir dispute in accordance with the UN resolutions have gone unheeded. She pointed out that 600,000 Indian troops continue to occupy Kashmir in the face of world condemnation. In five years, 40,000 people have been killed. She said there is no worse instance in contemporary history of such crimes against humanity.

Referring to the close brotherly relations with Mauritius and Uganda, the prime minister said progress and prosperity and strengthening democracy are our common goal. She said Mauritius and Uganda have identified many avenues of beneficial cooperation in educational, cultural, economic, and technical fields. She said Pakistan is proud having been associated with African countries struggle for independence and freedom. Ms. Benazir Bhutto said Pakistan has been cooperating with African countries in their efforts to improve their quality of life. We offer technical assistance and training facilities in a wide range of fields under the African and Technical Assistance Program. We have also extended credit facilities for the purchase of heavy engineering and mechanical goods, and even consumer items. Pakistan also provided emergency food and relief assistance where it was possible.

Turning to Pakistan, she said for rebuilding the national economy the government has launched a massive program of economic liberalization, privatization, and deregulation. We have created an economic climate conducive for the investors at home and abroad.

Speaking on the occasion, the Mauritius president welcomed the policy of economic liberalization in Pakistan. He said there is complete identity of views on bilateral and regional matters between the two countries. Referring to Pakistan's policy of nonproliferation, President Cassam Uteem said we appreciate Pakistan's commitment to the cause of peace. He said the two countries are sorting out issues relating to regular flights between the two countries by their national carriers.

Earlier, President Cassam Uteem had a meeting with the prime minister. Speaking on the occasion, Ms. Benazir Bhutto explained regional security environment with particular emphasis on Kashmir. President Cassam Uteem agreed with the prime minister about the necessity of a solution of the Kashmir issue. He said Mauritius would do whatever possible to use its good offices for the resolution of the problem. The Mauritius president also visited the Heavy Mechanical Complex, Taxila. He is scheduled to reach Lahore today on a two-day visit.

The vice president of Uganda, Dr. Specioza W. Kazibwe, visited the Faisal Mosque in Islamabad yesterday. She also visited the circle office of the first women's bank.

Pakistan: Army Chief Warns India Against Erecting Fence on Border

BK2403113296 Islamabad Radio Pakistan Network in Urdu 0200 GMT 24 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] General Jahangir Karamat, chief of the Army staff, has said that Pakistan's Armed Forces will not allow the fencing of working boundaries [preceding two words in English] by India. He was speaking informally to newsmen in Islamabad yesterday evening. When asked about the situation at the [Kashmir] Line of Control, he said Pakistan had to return the firing by Indian border security forces. He said it appears that good sense has finally prevailed upon India, and the firing by India's troops along the working boundary has now stopped.

Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka: Tamil Expatriates in London Forced To Pay Money to LTTE

BK2203150496 Colombo Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation International Service in English 1045 GMT 22 Mar 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Sri Lankan Tamil expatriates in London are forced to pay commissions to the LTTE [Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam] when they send money to their relatives in Sri Lanka. Official intelligence sources told the national news agency, LANKAPUVATH, that this also deprived the Sri Lankan Government of valuable foreign exchange earnings as the transaction is carried out through LTTE operatives in the two countries.

A Tamil living in London has to pay a commission of 10 pounds for every 200 pounds he is sending to an LTTE activist. The sender has to provide the name, address, passport and identity card number of his relative who would be calling over for the money from the contact in Colombo.

Sri Lanka: LTTE Dispatch Reports Offensives Against Troops

BK2203164996 (Internet) Tamil Eelam News WWW in Tamil 19 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] A Sri Lankan police station located on the city outskirts in the Batticaloa District was attacked and destroyed by a specially trained commando unit of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam [LTTE]. The attack which commenced at 1945 the day before yesterday lasted about 45 minutes. During the 45 minute assault, the police station came under full LTTE control. Five policemen were killed and several others were injured in the attack. Since the policemen could not withstand the LTTE onslaught, they fled the scene carrying their wounded colleagues. LTTE cadres who were there for about an hour moved the captured weapons and other equipment and later damaged buildings. Three liberation Tigers — Major Roy, Lieutenant Vannan, and Second Lieutenant Ravishankar, who were part of the LTTE unit that successfully conducted the operation, embraced martyrdom. Our tribute goes to those national heroes who sacrificed their dear and tender lives for the liberation of our motherland.

A report stating that the Vavunativu military post in Batticaloa came under LTTE's attack yesterday is incorrect. According to reports received from headquarters today, troops engaged in a route- clearing operation near the post, that is, 75 meters from the post, were the only ones attacked. Two soldiers were killed and five others seriously injured in the attack. Some weapons were also seized by the LTTE. The LTTE did not suffer any losses in the attack.

Troops are continuing incessant missile attacks on the Vadamarachchi areas. The worst missile attacks were carried out from Palali yesterday. Tondamanaru and Gerudavil localities have been rocked by missile attacks. A 76-year old woman was killed in a pathetic manner during these indiscriminate attacks carried out by Sri Lankan troops yesterday morning. Four persons, including three boys, were injured in Gerudavil locality.

Sri Lankan troops have occupied a vast area by aggression to expand the Kinnaiyadi military camp in Batticaloa. As the people living in that area fled dreading state terrorism, their houses were flattened and cleared. Besides pulling down houses with the help of bulldozers, trees were also destroyed.

Since Sri Lankan security forces and the government are frustrated by extensive LTTE attacks in the north and east, opposition parties have leveled charges against the Sri Lankan Government. The opposition's charge is that the Sri Lankan Government, which has deployed a large number of troops in Jaffna purportedly to capture it, is incapable of saving any part of the country. Pointing to the fact that several military posts have been targeted and heavy losses inflicted on the Navy in the LTTE's typhoon-like attacks during the past 10 days, the opposition has also reported that more than 100 soldiers have been killed. Opposition leaders say they could also have captured Jaffna, but, they were fully aware that they would have suffered setbacks eventually. The opposition hints at a Mallakam offensive.

The Tigers' aspirations: Motherland of Tamil Eelam!

Sri Lanka: LTTE Reports Ambush on Troops in Weligama

BK2503035996 (Internet) Tamil Eelam News WWW in Tamil 20 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam [LTTE] launched a surprise attack early this morning on Sri Lankan troops in Colombo-controlled Weligama. There is no information from headquarters on the attack. However, giving information to a foreign news agency, a Sri Lankan military spokesman said seven soldiers were killed and five others injured in the attack. He added that the military repulsed the LTTE offensive with missile and mortar attacks. This is the second offensive launched by the LTTE in three days on Weligama. It may be recalled that the Sri Lankan troops suffered heavy losses in their attack on Mallakam last Monday.

Meanwhile, troops of the Vavuniya military camp entered a neighboring Tamil village and arrested 10 Tamil civilians. The troops, who entered the village on 17 March, also attacked and tortured civilians. Those arrested have been taken to Vavuniya military camp. They have not yet been released.

Following acts of horror committed by the Chandrika Kumaratunga government's Air Force in Nachchikuda, 172 families are now staying in a Catholic church. Government agent of Kilinochchi, program officers, representatives of nongovernmental organizations, priests, and others have visited the area, which looks deserted due to the troop rampage. Government agents also distributed relief materials to the displaced people. Government officials who visited the area say civilian homes in Nachchikuda have been reduced to ashes, trees and plants damaged, and fishing gear destroyed in rocket attacks launched from helicopters.

Missile attacks were launched from Palali military base at 0940 to 1200 yesterday against civilian settlements in Velvettiturai, Urikkadu, Mayilanthalai, Valvai, and Tondaiman Aru localities.

A Mullaitivu hospital ambulance has also been impounded by the military while returning from Tirumalai. Dr. Sivaguru, director of health services of Mullaitivu-Kilinochchi zone, said the ambulance taking officials to a meeting on health facilities in the northeastern province was detained by Army captain Jayakodi at Tandikkulam. He said the people would have to face severe hardship now as it was the only ambulance available at Mullaitivu hospital for emergency purposes. The ambulance was donated by the United Nations high commission.

The Tigers' aspirations: Motherland of Tamil Eelam!

Sri Lanka: Heavy Fighting Raging in Eastern Region; Toll Mounts to 41

BK2303161896 Hong Kong AFP in English 1554 GMT 23 Mar 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Colombo, March 23 (AFP) — Heavy fighting raged in eastern Sri Lanka Saturday as Tamil Tiger guerrillas wiped out an entire army patrol, killing 40 troopers and a civilian bus passenger, official sources here said.

Gunmen of the separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) ambushed the security forces at Sittandy in the district of Batticaloa triggering fierce hand-to-hand fighting, the sources said.

"A civilian bus drove straight into the fire fight and a Muslim passenger was killed on the spot," a police source here said adding that the bus was taking pilgrims home after a religious ceremony.

Initial reports said 28 soldiers were killed and another 12 wounded but officials said it was now confirmed that all 40 troopers in the platoon were dead.

The army poured reinforcements to the area and deployed two MI-24 helicopter gunships to attack the Tamil Tiger guerrillas involved in the attack but rebel casualties were not immediately known, the sources here said.

The attack marked a further escalation of violence in the embattled eastern region where 12 days ago the LTTE attacked an elite police commando unit and killed 23 troopers.

Five days ago, 18 soldiers died in a mine attack in the north of the country. Another 11 soldiers died in two attacks over last weekend.

The LTTE is leading a protracted campaign for an independent homeland in the island's northern and eastern regions where the two million Tamil minority is concentrated. More than 50,000 people have died in the fighting since 1972.

Sri Lanka: 50 Tamil Rebels, 40 Soldiers Killed in Battle in East

BK2503055696 Colombo DAILY NEWS in English 25 Mar 96

[Received via Internet]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Troops engaged in a search operation in Vandaramulla in Batticaloa, Eastern Province, on Saturday killed at least 50 Liberation Tigers of Tamil

Eelam [LTTE] and wounded many more in a fierce one hour battle.

Forty soldiers were killed and 13 soldiers were also wounded in this confrontation, Operational Headquarters in Colombo said.

Nearly 300 Tigers had surprised the troops who had been advancing towards Vandaramulla on receipt of information about the presence of LTTE cadres in the area.

Reinforcements had been rushed to the scene from nearby army detachments which had used artillery fire to inflict heavy losses on the enemy.

Meanwhile Eravur police in the Eastern Province repulsed a Tiger attack on their station on Sunday, killing at least one Tiger.

Police recovered his body, two Arul grenades and two LMG drums.

Sri Lanka: Radio Reports 'Major Military Buildup'

BK2403114396 Colombo Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation International Service in English 1045 GMT 24 Mar 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] A major military buildup is under way in the north. Military sources say that the security forces are preparing for their largest-ever offensive against the LTTE [Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam]. The Tigers are also reportedly making preparations to defend territory under their control. Defense officials have so far refused to discuss the possible date or target areas of the operation. However, they have acknowledged that the Army is amassing troops and equipment in the north. The offensive is expected to be larger than the month-long Operation Riviresa [Sunshine], which ended in the recapture of the Jaffna city and the Vallikalan division of the Jaffna peninsula last year.

Twenty-four soldiers were killed in an LTTE attack on an Army patrol in the Sittandi area of the Batticalao District on Friday. At least 14 other soldiers were wounded. The terrorists also suffered heavy casualties when two Air Force helicopters counterattacked. The fighting reportedly broke out at around 1500. The wounded soldiers have been evacuated to the Batticaloa hospital.

Meanwhile, the LTTE has attacked a bus carrying Muslim devotees in the Sandiveli area of Eravur in the east. At least one person was killed and three others injured in the attack. The devotees have been returning home after attending special prayers at the end of an international Islamic conference in the western town of Puttalam on Friday. According to the Eravur police, the bus had been carrying at least 40 people. The injured have been admitted to the Batticaloa and Eravur hospitals. The security forces have launched a special operation in the Sandiveli area.

Sri Lanka: Tamil Tigers Kill 12 Soldiers in Fresh Attack

BK2503070096 Hong Kong AFP in English 0635 GMT 25 Mar 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Colombo, March 25 (AFP) — Tamil Tiger guerrillas attacked an army patrol in northeast Sri Lanka on Monday, killing at least 12 soldiers and wounding three others, officials said.

Gunmen of the separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) ambushed the foot patrol at Pulmoddai in Trincomalee district as they were clearing a road of possible rebel mines, officials said.

"There was a close fire fight and Tigers too may have suffered several casualties," said an official in Trincomalee, 260 kilometers (160 miles) northeast of here.

The ambush came shortly after the Tigers blew up a telephone exchange in eastern district of Ampara, cutting off communication links to more than 300 subscribers, including security forces, officials said.

The latest attacks came two days after the Tigers killed 40 soldiers in the neighbouring district of Batticaloa, marking an upsurge in rebel attacks.

The military claimed that it killed at least 50 guerrillas during a fierce one-hour battle on Saturday, but the LTTE's clandestine radio, the voice of Tigers on Monday said they lost only three men.

Tigers are leading a protracted campaign for independence in the island's embattled northern and eastern regions where the two million Tamil minority is concentrated.

Sri Lanka: Rebel Suspects Arrested in Security Operation in Colombo

BK2403110096 Colombo DAILY NEWS in English 23 Mar 96

[Received via Internet]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Combined cordon and search operations by the security forces and the police in the city following the recent recoveries of bombs and explosives in the city have led to the detention of 15 Tiger suspects, according to a senior police officer.

He said that a three day combined operations conducted earlier this week led to the detention of about 50 persons but most of them were released following questioning. Only 15 were detained pending further investigations.

According to the officer, those in custody are from Chavakachcheri, Thennamarachchai and Vadamarachchi area in the north.

Police on Tuesday recovered three, 30 kilo bombs stashed away under a garbage heap along Old Moor Street, Kotahena following information from the public. A few weeks prior to that, police recovered some time bombs and grenades hidden in a culvert also in the Kotahena area.

Sri Lanka: Air Force Bombing Reportedly Killed Civilians, Not Rebels

BK2503061696 Colombo SUNDAY OBSERVER in English 24 Mar 96

[Report by Vavuniya correspondent — Received via Internet]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] THE GOVERNMENT was informed on Friday by officials based in the North and by the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF) that those killed in Nachchikudah by Air Force bombing on March 16 were civilians displaced from Jaffna.

Kilinochchi Government Agent S. Thillainadarajah, in a despatch to Colombo, has said that ten civilians were killed on the spot, and five others in the hospital. Forty seven people were seriously injured and 17 others had escaped with minor injuries. The people killed and injured belong to a fisher community displaced by the fighting in the North.

Earlier reports said that the LTTE [Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam] suffered casualties in the SLAF [Sri Lanka Air Force] bombing.

In a letter to President Chandrika Kumaratunga TULF Batticaloa District Parliamentarian Joseph Pararajasingham has appealed to her to order inquiry into the bombing.

The letter states: "The attack by the Sri Lankan Air Force on innocent civilians at Nochchikudah in the Mannar district in the early hours on March 16, has caused alarm and further fear among the displaced Tamil population in the North who are already undergoing severe material and moral misery, depression, anxiety and stress.

"The aerial attack in the fishing village seems to be a retaliatory act against the attack on Naval gunboats by the LTTE on the previous day, March 15.

"The Government Agent Kilinochchi who despatched a team of officers to visit the area, has reported that 16 innocent civilians were killed in this attack all of whom are from the families of fishermen which includes seven children below the age of fifteen. It is also reported that about 50 civilians were injured.

"This unprovoked vindictive reprisal deserves utmost denigration and should never be reported in the interest of bringing any future settlement to the ethnic issue. The confidence of the civilian population must never be forfeited however tempting the provocation.

"It is saddening to note that we are going back to the era when savage reprisals were regular on helpless civilians after what had been a salutary lull, but all too brief."

Mr. Pararajasingham has also appealed to the President to take positive steps to avoid a recurrence of such acts and to afford immediate medical and material relief to those affected.

Meanwhile, answering a question by a local radio station military spokesman Brigadier Sarath Munasinghe said on Thursday that Air Force attacked only the LTTE camps in Nochchikudah and unless the civilians were within the camp he did not believe the story. He also said that civilians were repeatedly told not to visit LTTE camps since these camps could come under attack at any moment.

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